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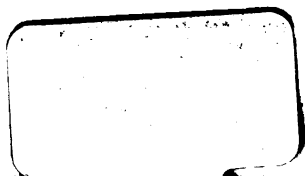
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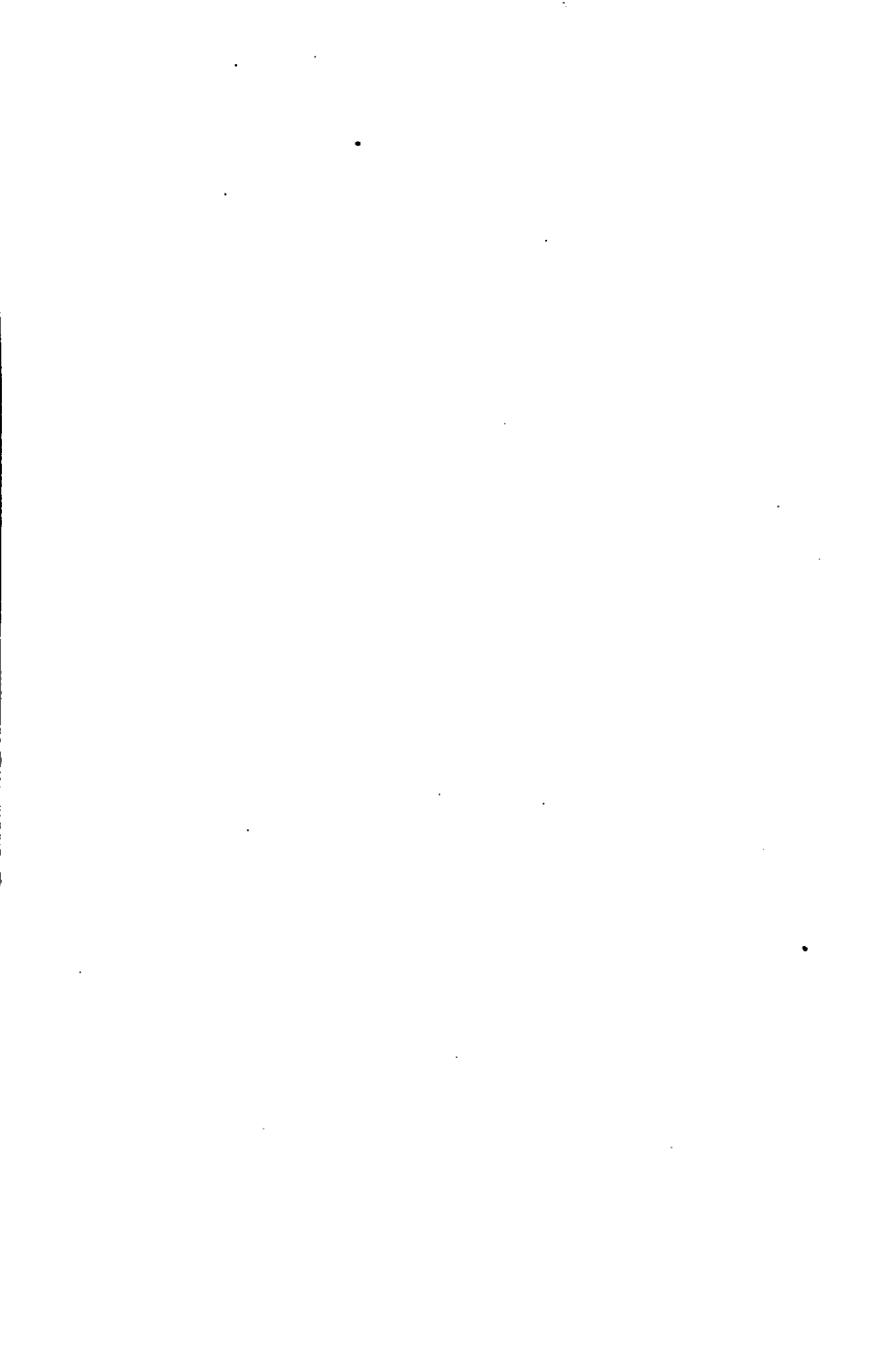
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Gaines

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A VILLAGE IN PICARDY



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A WELL-KNOWN TUNE

A VILLAGE IN PICARDY

BY

RUTH GAINES

AUTHOR OF "THE VILLAGE SHIELD," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

President of Smith College

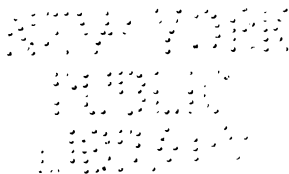


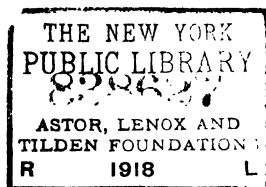
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PREFACE.

THE history and the work of the Smith College Relief Unit in the Somme is known wherever reconstruction work in France is spoken of. This brief account does not purport to give anything but a small cross-section, the picture of but one of the villages in our care. It is told in the first person to make the telling easier. As I have said, of all our villages, Canizy was the most beloved. All the Unit had a share in it.

The picture is given as it was seen day by day. What was true in this section, may not be true in another. Here the German retreat was so rapid that the devastation, though appalling, was not complete; whole avenues of trees were left standing in places, and only two churches were dynamited, by contrast with the two hundred and twenty-five destroyed throughout the *région dévastée*. It was per-

haps in more calculated ways that the Prussians here vented their spite; in the burning of family pictures, the wrecking of machinery, the cutting of the trees about the Calvaries, and the taking away of the bells from the church towers. They left behind them here, as everywhere, ruin and silence; a silence of industry, of agriculture, of all the normal ways of life; a silence which has given the plain of Picardy the name of "The Land of Death."

RUTH GAINES.

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¹ From Poulbot's *Des Gosses et des Bonhommes*.

² From the Almanach Hachette.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

No one, it may safely be said, can see this war as a whole. The nations taking part in it girdle the world, and no people is unaffected by it. Real knowledge can be gained of only comparatively small sections of the conflict, and we are grateful to those who, knowing a small section, give us a faithful account of their own observation and experience, and refrain from speculation and generalisation.

Among the infinitude of tragedies few have appealed more poignantly to our imaginations than those involved in the devastation of Picardy; and among the attempts at salvage few details have attracted the sympathetic attention of America more powerfully than the efforts of the Smith College Relief Unit. Their heroic persistence in the work of evacuation under the very guns of the great offensive of March, 1918, made the members of the Unit

suddenly conspicuous; but the more picturesque feats of that terrible emergency had been preceded by a long winter of quiet work. The material results were largely wiped out; the spiritual results will remain. It is the method of that work as carried on in a single village that is described in this little book. When we have read it we know what kind of people these were who clung to the remnants of their homes in the midst of desolation. Their character and temper are depicted with kindly candour; they were very human and very much worth saving. When the time comes for reconstruction on a large scale, such an account as this will be of value in enabling us to realise the nature of the task and in teaching us how to set about it.

Smith College is proud of what these graduates have done and are doing; and this note is written to assure the Unit rather than the outside world that those who have to stay at home see and understand.

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON.

*Smith College,
Northampton, Mass.*

A VILLAGE IN PICARDY



THE GERMAN RETREAT

A VILLAGE IN PICARDY

CHAPTER I

UN VILLAGE TOUT OUBLIÉ

AS a relief visitor, in a Unit authorized by the French Government *au secours dans la région dévastée*, I have lived recently in the Department of the Somme. There I had in my care a village with a personality which I venture to think is typical of Picardy. As such, I would present it to you.

It was on a winter's morning, by snow and lantern light, that I traversed for the last time a road grown familiar to me through months of use, the road which led from our encampment, known as that of the "Dames Américaines" at Grécourt, past the railroad station of Hombleux to the hamlet of Canizy.

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It leads elsewhere, of course, this road; to the military highway for instance, which has already seen in the last three years three momentous troop movements: the advance and retreat of the French, the advance and retreat of the Germans, and, again, the victorious sweep of the French and British armies which reclaimed, just a year ago, the valleys of the Somme. It leads to the front, that fluctuating line, some twelve miles distant, in the shelter of which we have lived and worked for the ruined countryside. It is an important route, on some occasions choked with artillery, on others with blue columned infantry swinging down its vista arched with elms. Officers' cars flash by there, and deafening *camions*. But for me, until this the morning of my departure, it has led to Canizy.

There is no longer a station at Hombleux, because the Germans destroyed it. One therefore paces the platform and stamps one's feet with the cold. Down the track, from the direction of Canizy, the headlight of the engine

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will presently emerge. All about, the plain lies white and level; the break in the hedge where a footpath crosses the tracks to the village is almost visible. In fancy, I take it, past a fire-gutted farm house and eastward on a long curve across fields where the snow hides an untilled growth of weeds. The highway which parallels the railroad, recedes in a perspective of marching trees, till, topping a little rise, a wooden scaffold stands clear against the sky. It was formerly a German observation post. To the left, equally gaunt, rises the Calvary which marks the entrance to the village. And beyond, cupped in a gentle declivity, lie the ruins of Canizy, framed in snow. So I saw it last; so all the way to Amiens, and from Amiens to Paris, as the train bore me away, I saw it; so in its misery and its beauty, I would picture it to you.

You will not find my hamlet on any map of the *région dévastée* with which I am familiar; it is not listed among the destroyed villages of the Department, although it was

looted, dynamited and defaced, even to the cutting of the oak trees about its Calvary. You would have to search minutely in history for any mention of it among the King's towns of Picardy which became famous in guarding his frontier of the Somme. Comparatively modern and quite insignificant, it lies beside a tree-bordered, dyked canal, one of many which tapped the rich plain and bore the produce of farm and garden to the market centres of Péronne, Ham and St. Quentin. To this canal sloped its fields of chicory, leeks, pumpkins, potatoes, turnips, carrots and other garden truck. Crooked lanes, brick-walled or faced with trim brick cottages, led from it back through the village to higher ground. There, before the war, the *grands cultivateurs*, such as M. le Maire, and M. Lanne, who rents the old Château, would have ploughed and sown their winter wheat.

In those days, Canizy had a railroad also, and I have heard how for three sous one could travel by it to Nesle. It took only eight min-

utes then,—but now! By it as well, one went more quickly than by canal to St. Quentin or Péronne with perhaps a hundred huge baskets of vegetables on market day. But the Germans tore up the bed of the railroad and destroyed the locks of the canal. They blew up, too, the bridge on the main highway which used to pass the Calvary at the foot of the village street. Cut off, reached only by a circuitous and deep-rutted road which is impassable at certain hours every day owing to *mitrailleuse* practice across it, Canizy lapsed into oblivion. As its mayor said on our first visit, “Look you, it has been quite forgotten,—*c’est un village tout oublié.*”

In 1914, Canizy had 445 inhabitants. Of these, there were perhaps half a dozen substantially well off, such as M. le Maire, possessing ten hectares of wheat land, a herd of seven cows, four horses, thirty rabbits and fifty hens. Besides, M. le Maire, or his wife, was proprietor of one of the three village *épiceries*. Joined with him in respectful mention by the

townspeople are the lessee of the Château, and various owners of property not only in Canizy but in the surrounding country. Of these gentry, not one apparently had been made prisoner by the Germans. They were to be found on their other estates, at Compiègne, at Ham, or in Paris. Even the real mayor was an absentee, so that the acting mayor, lame, red-faced and beady-eyed, was the only representative of landed interests left in the little town. He had had, however, a dozen or more neighbours scarcely less comfortably provided with worldly goods than himself: M. Picard, for instance, who owned extensive market gardens and employed six workers in the fields. He it was who did not suffer even during the German occupation, for was he not placed in charge of the *ravitaillement*? And though his friends the Germans took him away with them, a prisoner, did not his wife and children live well on his buried money, eh? O, *Mme. Picard, elle était riche*. There were the Tourets, two brothers, who held connecting

high-walled gardens in the centre of the village, and their next door neighbour, the comely widow, Mme. Gabrielle. Directly opposite ranged the Cordier farm, comprising an orchard of 860 trees, ten cows, two bulls, one ox, eighty-seven pigs, three horses, one hundred and fifty chickens, and one hundred and fifty rabbits. Smaller cottages there were, some rented, but most of them owned, where the families raised just enough for their own necessities, or worked for their more prosperous townsfolk. There were the village cobbler, the two store keepers who competed with the mayor, a sprinkling of factory hands who walked along the dyke a mile and a half to work in the brush factory at Offoy, and last on the street, but not least in social importance, the domestics of the Château. There were, too, the poor whom one has always; but in Canizy, so far as I could learn, they consisted of but two shiftless families.

The civic life of the village centred about its public school and its teacher, and, of course,

its curé and its church. The monotony of toil was relieved by market days and fête days and first communions and neighbourhood gatherings. Of these last I have seen a few pictures, groups of wrinkled grandparents and sturdy sons and grandchildren stiffly posed in Sunday best, yet happy in spite of it. Behind them pleached pear trees or grape vines make an appliqué against a patterned brick wall. But there are not many of the pictures even left, for you will understand, the Germans systematically searched them out and burned them in great piles. The one that I remember best, a poor mother had torn out of its frame the night of her flight. "I could not think well," she said. "The Boches had wrenched my Coralie away—so lovely a child that every one on the streets of Ham turned to look at her curls as she walked—but I did save this. See, there she is,—how pretty and good, and that is my eldest, a soldier. He is dead. And that, with the accordion, is my seventeen-year-old Raoul, like his sister, a

prisonnier civil. What do the Boches do, think you," she continued, "with such? One hears nothing, nothing. Never a letter, never a message. Even when Mme. Lefèvre and Mme. Ponchon returned, they brought no word. The prisoners, evidently they are separated. One is told that they work and starve, —that is all."

A community so homogeneous in its interests, was bound to link itself intimately by marriage as well. The intricacies of the family trees of Canizy were a source of constant mental effort, as one discovered that Mme. Gense was really Mme. Butin, that is, she had at least married M. Butin, and that Germaine Tabary was so called because she was living with her maternal grandparents, whereas her father's name again was Gense, and her mother was known by the sounding title of Mme. Gense-Tabary. "But why these distinctions?" one continually demanded upon unravelling the puzzles for purposes of record.



- Ils sont là !!!

[They are over there!!!]

"Because, otherwise, one would become confused," was the reply.

Such, peaceful, prosperous, yet stirred by family bickerings enough to spice its days, was Canizy before the war.

Canizy to-day numbers just one hundred souls, fifty being children and fifty adults. It was in March, 1917, that the village was blotted out. Two years and a half of German occupation preceded that event. In every house German soldiers had been billeted; one sees now on the door posts the number of officers and men allotted, or the last warning, perhaps, in regard to concealed fire-arms. For two years and a half the inhabitants had been prisoners, for the same length of time there had been no school and no mass. Yet the villagers do not speak unkindly of their conquerors. They fared better than many, for they fell to the lot of the Bavarians, who are reputed to be more humane than the Prussians. Besides, Picardy is inured to invasions, which for centuries have swept across her

plains. By them, fortitude has been inbred.

But one day last spring, the Bavarians filed away northward. Prussians succeeded them. Quickly came the order for the villagers to evacuate their homes. At the same time, the able-bodied, men and women, youths and maidens, were seized and held. Weeping mothers, tottering grandfathers, and helpless children,—the remnant,—were driven forth with what scant possessions they could snatch, to the town of Voyennes, four kilometres away. There, huddled with the like refugees of other villages, they remained ten days. From it they could see the ascending smoke, black by day and red by night, and hear the detonations which marked the destruction of their homes. They returned to the blackened ruins,—as, in the words of a historian of the Thirty Years' War, their ancestors had done. “Les paysans,” he says, “qui avaient survécu à tant de désastres étaient accourus dans leurs villages aussitôt que les ennemis s'éloignèrent de ce champ de carnage. Mais, sans ressources

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d'aucune sorte, sans habitations, sans chevaux, sans bestiaux, sans instruments de culture, sans grains pour la semence, que pouvaient-ils faire? Mourir——” *

But our villagers, though equally pillaged in the year 1917, were not doomed to death. The Germans had retreated before the advancing French and British armies, and the ruins of Canizy ere long were held by Scottish troops.

**Deux Années d'Invasion Espagnole en Picardie, 1635-1636. Alcuis Leduc.*

CHAPTER II

LE CHÂTEAU DE BON-SÉJOUR

IN Canizy, after the Germans were through with it, not one of its forty-seven houses stood intact. Most were roofless shells, or fallen heaps of brick. An occasional ell, a barn, a rabbit hutch, or a chicken house,—such were the shelters into which the returning villagers crept. Nor was there furniture. Pillage had preceded destruction and loaded wagons had borne away the plunder of household linen, feather mattresses, clothes presses, chairs or anything practicable, into Germany. Scattered through the ruins to this day lie iron bedsteads twisted by fire, the metal stands of the housewives' sewing machines, broken farm tools and fire-cracked stoves. One day, beside a half-demolished wall, I came upon a group of little girls playing house. They had



- Encore un autre petit frère ?
- Oui, un petit belge .

[What, another little brother?
Yes, a little Belgian.]

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marked off their rooms with broken bricks, set up for a stove a rusty brazier, and stocked their imaginary cupboards with fragments of gay china. A grey, drizzling day it was, and their toy *ménage* had no roof. But was it more cheerless than the hovels they called their homes, where their mothers, like them, had gathered in the wreckage left by the Germans, —a stove here, a kettle there, and a “Boche” bed of unplanned planks, perhaps, with an improvised mattress of grass? I paused to regard the play house. “What is this room,” I inquired. “*La cuisine*,” was the quick reply. “And this?” “*La salle à manger*.” “But this next?” “*Une salle à manger*,” came the chorus. “Then all the rest are *salles à manger*?” “*Assurément*,” with merry laughter. “O, I see. Are you then so hungry at your house?” And I turned away with an uncomfortable conviction that they were.

One after another, if you listen, the village mothers will tell of their return; with what hope against hope they looked for some trace

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of vanished husbands, sons and daughters; with what despair they realised the utter ruin. "My cat," said one, "was the only living thing I found. She was waiting for me on the door-step." But those were fortunate who found even the door sills remaining to their homes. Those who were shelterless took possession of some semi-habitable corner of their neighbour's outbuildings, or even of cellars, and furnished them with what they could find. As I went about among them, in an effort to supply immediate needs, I was continually told: "That cupboard, you understand, is not mine. I am taking care of it for Mme. Huillard, who is with the Boches. When she returns, I must give it up." "This bed,"—a very comfortable one, by the way—"belongs to M. de Curé, whom the Germans made prisoner." "Those blankets an English soldier gave me." "This stove"—in answer to a query as to whether a new one would not be appreciated—"well, to be sure, it has no legs, but one props it with bricks, *et ça marche, tout de même!*" The

boast of the Prussians in regard to their handiwork was true: "Tout le pays n'est qu'un immense et triste désert, sans arbre, ni buisson, ni maison. Nos pionniers ont scié ou haché les arbres qui, pendant des journées entières, se sont abattus jusqu'à ce que le sol fût rasé. Les puits sont comblés, les villages anéantis. Des cartouches de dynamite éclatent partout. L'atmosphère est obscurcie de poussière et de fumée."*

By the time of the arrival of our Unit, six months after the Great Retreat, our villagers had recovered from the shock of their sorrow. They had managed to save enough bedding and clothing for actual warmth; they had planted and worked their gardens; they were used to the simplest terms of life. This courage rather than the too-evident squalor, was what impressed one on a first visit to Canizy. Dumb endurance drew one's heart as no protestations could have done. It made me long

*Almanach Hachette, 1918, quoted from the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

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to make my home among my villagers, so that I might the more quickly meet their needs.

But this could not be, because every habitable cranny was crowded to capacity. Hence it was that I lodged with the rest of the Unit, four miles away, at the *Château de Bon-Séjour*. Again, you will not find my château so called upon the map. It is merely a name that represents to me six months of hardship, of comradeship and of some small achievement that made the whole worth while.

At the Château, then, but not in it, lived the Unit. For the Château, a German Headquarters, and a most comfortable one, in its day, had been wrecked in the best German style. There were seventeen of us, American college women, to whom the Government had entrusted the task of reconstructing thirty-six of the 25,000 square miles of devastated France. Two were doctors, three nurses, four chauffeurs, and the rest social workers. Among them were a cobbler, a carpenter, a farmer, a domestic science expert; and of other

manual labor there was nothing to which they did not turn their hands. It was in the golden days of early September that my companions reached the Château allotted them in that indefinite area known as the War Zone, and became from that moment a part of the Third Army of France. But I, for reasons best known to the passport bureau of that army, did not arrive until October. The seventy-mile run from Paris was made in our own truck, driven by two of our chauffeurs. As we cleared the dusty suburbs and took the highway northward, war seemed very far away. To be sure, we often passed grey *camions* rumbling to or from the front, or saw fleeting automobiles containing officers whiz by. But the country, the fields of stacked grain or of freshly seeded wheat; the apple orchards,—sometimes miles of trees along the roadside festooned with red fruit,—poplared vistas of smoke-blue hill and valley, with church spires and red roofs in the distance,—all these spoke of peace. Even the air lay in

Le Château de Bon-Séjour 23

a motionless amber haze, spiced with apples and wood smoke and ferns touched by frost. But suddenly war was upon us. As we topped a sharp rise we came upon an empty dugout, about which stood a shell-shattered grove. Lopped orchards followed, zig-zag trenches, a bombarded village set in fields bearing no crop but barbed-wire entanglements and tall weeds turned brown. The country became flatter as we hurried along, intent on reaching the Château before dark. At intervals we made detours around crumpled bridges. Occasionally a sentry halted us, to be shown our permits known as *feuilles bleues*. By this time the sun was setting and caught and turned to gold a squadron of aeroplanes. Like great dragon-flies they coursed and wheeled and presently alighted, to run along the fields to their canvas-domed hangars. In the after-glow, we could still see occasional peasants or soldiers working late at ploughing with oxen or tractors. But otherwise, mile on mile, the

brown plain, dotted here and there with scraggly thickets, lay deserted.

It was dusk when we turned off the main road between the half dozen dynamited farmhouses that once formed a tiny village, past the little church, and into the gate of the Château. To the rear of this ruined mass, set in a row as soldiers would set them, were the three *baraques*, or temporary shacks, which the Army had made ready for us. Very cheerful they looked that night with the lamplight streaming from open doors and windows, and the smell of savoury stew upon the air.

But morning revealed what darkness had hidden: the destruction which this estate shared with the entire countryside. Of the noble spruces and poplars which had formed the two main avenues leading the one to the church and the other to the highway, only a ragged line remained; the rest lay as they had been felled, in tangles of crossed trunks. The Château itself, an imposing building as one viewed it through the frame of a scrolled wrought-iron

gate, proved to be a rectangle of roofless walls. The water-tower, draped in flaming ampelopsis, no longer held the reservoir which had supplied in former days the mansion, the greenhouses, the servants' quarters and the stables. The greenhouses themselves, the *jardin d'hiver*, and the *orangerie*, where were grown hot-house fruits, retained scarcely one unbroken pane of glass. Dynamite had been employed freely; but—an instance of German economy—the main roof of the greenhouse had been demolished by the well-calculated fall of a heavy spruce. In this same greenhouse were the remains of a white tiled tank, and a heating plant which had involved the construction of three new buildings. "*Voilà*," said Marcel, the sixteen-year-old son of the gardener, as he pointed it out, "the officers' bath."

Marcel and his mother (whom, we think, the Germans left behind because of her too shrewd tongue) still take unbounded pride in the place. Even before repairs were made on her own cottage, Marie routed Marcel out of a

morning to weed the flower beds and to fence off what, by courtesy, she calls the lawn. By this last manoeuvre she renders difficult both the entrance and exit of our cars. She also refuses to open for us the wicket for foot passengers, probably because in the days of Mme. la Baronne's hospitality there were none. Here entertaining was done on a patrician scale. A French officer who stopped in passing, told us how he was in the habit of coming each year to hunt in season. There was a gallery of famous pictures. In short, the Château of his friend, Mme. la Baronne, was the show place of the countryside. "To think," said he, as he pointed to a sign still standing beside the gate, "to think that dogs were forbidden,—and yet the Germans came here!" Marie, having been left by her mistress in charge of the property, carries the responsibility with seriousness. A letter arrives: Mme. la Baronne desires that the vegetable garden be always locked, and that no trees be cut. It is she, doubtless, who directs

that the lawn be preserved. "Poor Madame," sighs Marie, "she little knows. Pray heaven she may never return to see what the Boches have done!"

With Marie's and Marcel's help, one can reconstruct from the ruins the gracious comfort of the old estate, the hospitable kitchen, the chambers warm in winter and tree-shaded in summer, the wide balustrades where the guests sat in long summer gloamings, courting the breeze. It was Marcel who pointed out the view one gains from the steps of the Château, straight through gaping doors and windows, to the sundial from which radiated the alleys of the grove: bronze oaks and beeches, golden plane trees, spruces and tasselled pines.

How is the beauty of that day departed! Half of the grove lies now a waste of scrubby second growth and fallen timber, for here the Germans employed Russian prisoners as lumbermen. No longer the huntsmen and their ladies pace the alleys. Now, on almost

any day you may see old women dragging branches from the woods to the *basse-cour*, to be cut up for fuel. Twenty-six of them, no men, and only two children, the wretched villagers had found in the Baronne's stables their only shelter after the razing of their homes.

Yet we entered the winter far less warmly housed than they. Our two-room *baragues* were supplemented in time by six portable houses which we had brought from America; two we used as dormitories and the other four as a dispensary, a store, a kitchen, and a dining room. Our furnishings were of the simplest; camp beds, a stove for each building, a table, camp stools, and shelves. Our wood—when we had any—was chopped by a vigorous old lady who walked a mile and a half from the nearest village to do it. Our laundry was done upon a stove a foot square in a small building known as the Morgue: such having been its use during the German occupation. Marie made our cuisine on her range in a hut which she had built into the ruins of her cottage. Zélie car-

ried food and dishes in baskets to and fro from kitchen to dining room, a quarter of a mile apart. The one luxury of our existence was hot water, prepared by Marcel in a huge cauldron, and brought in covered metal pitchers to our doors.

Only once did Marcel fail us, and that was because the rightful owner of the cauldron left the *basse-cour* for her newly erected *baraque*. She requested our kind permission to transport thither her property. "There is another cauldron at Buverchy, which I think you could rent in place of mine," she suggested. "It belonged to my cousin, Mme. Bouvet, and is now in Mme. Josse's yard. No one is using it." Marcel was dispatched to make inquiries, and later, with horse and wagon, to fetch the cauldron home. But meantime there had dawned a morning when we were not wakened by the clump-clump of Marcel's sabots, and the setting down of the water jug with a thud upon the frozen ground.

For wood, we depended largely on the

chivalry of nearby encampments of troops, French, English, Canadian or American, to whom our need became apparent. For food, we were supplied by the Army with our quota of bread and a soldier, M. Jean, to fetch it. Vegetables and some fruit we obtained from our villages, of which we had sixteen in our charge. Often these were presents, thrust upon us through gratitude; nor could we pay for them. Meat was plentiful in all the towns of the Zone, where the Army was charged with supplying the civilian population with food. Anyone, going on any errand, marketed; and the dispensary jitney, which might have started in the morning with doctors, nurses, kits, and relief supplies, often returned at night overflowing with cabbages, potatoes, pounds of roast, bags of coal, and *bidons* of oil.

Our relief supplies came through more regular channels, largely from Paris, where one member of the Unit devoted all her time to buying. These were either shipped to the nearest railroad station, or sent by the French

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Army, free of charge, in a thundering *camion*. We never knew when to expect this last, nor what it would contain. Sunday seemed a favourite day for its arrival. On one occasion, there were three pigs, loose and hungry, and no pen to put them in; seventy-five crated chickens followed, with the request that the number be verified, and the crates returned. Such were the colonel's orders. But, seeing that the Unit carpenter had to construct a chicken yard, this command was modified by a judicious distribution of cigarettes. Mixed cargoes of Red Cross boxes, stoves, bundles of wool from the Bon Marché which had burst *en route*, and sundries, were even harder to deal with.

We had no store room. The *cave* of the Château, seeping with tons of *débris* which in places bent with its weight the steel ceiling, and open along one whole side to the elements,—this contained our dairy, our lumber, our fuel, our vegetables, our groceries, and our relief supplies. It abounded in rats, cats, and

bats. But such as it was, it was the centre of our activities. By night often weirdly lighted with candles, by day never empty, laughter rather than complaints floated from its dim interior. Here we held our first store; here the children who had trudged over from Canizy, Hombleux or Esmery-Hallon waited in line for their milk; here were assembled and tied up the thousands of packages for our *fêtes de Noël*. As winter advanced, we prepared for a day in the *cave* by encasing our feet in peasants' socks and sabots, and our hands in worsted mittens. The soldiers in the trenches had nothing on us.

Whether at home or on the road, our days were long and arduous, and seldom what we had planned. Even Sunday became part of the working week, for then we attempted to entertain our official supervisors and co-laborers, and all chance acquaintances. M. le Commandant of the Third Army has dined with us; the ladies of the American Fund for French Wounded, under whom we held our

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section, have come to call; the Friends walk over from Esmerly-Hallon where they are building *baragues* for the commune; a lonesome Ambulance boy who has tramped ten miles and must retrace his steps before dark, drops in; a squad of Canadian Foresters rides through the gate; reporters, accompanied by a French officer, harry us with questions. But most frequent, and most welcome of all our visitors, are our countrymen, the —th New York Engineers. They came from home, those men, to be the first of our army under fire. But during the early days of the autumn, their talk was not of their work, but of ours. They brought us slat walks, called duck walks, to keep us out of the mud, and wood, and benches, and stoves. They came with mandolins and guitars and violins to give an entertainment to our villagers, and stayed for a buffet dinner and dance. They sent their trucks to take us in turn to a party at their encampment. But all that was before the Cambrai drive. As we, in our *baragues*,

listened night and day to that bombardment, we little knew the heroic part taken in it by our Engineers. Surprised, unarmed, with pick and shovel they stood and fought; and later, hastily equipped with rifles, helped save the day for England on the bitterly contested front. But you have doubtless read of them in the papers, for they were the first of our soldiers to die in battle and to be mentioned in the orders of the day.

CHAPTER III

M. LE MAIRE

BY rights, Canizy belongs with three other hamlets, to the commune of Hombleux. The mayor of Hombleux is therefore in reality also the mayor of Canizy. But each of the hamlets has an acting mayor besides. And, to complicate this matter of mayors still further, the real mayor of the commune has left his post to reside in his mansion in the Boulevard Haussmann in Paris. Inquiring into the reason of his non-residence, I was told that he was broken in health, and belonged to a political party which, at the moment, was no longer in power. Hence the so-called mayors, with whom rests the welfare of our villages.

Before the war, the present mayor of Hombleux was one of the *grands cultivateurs*. With Mme. la Baronne, Mme. Desmarchez

and M. Gomart, he owned most of the rich acres encircling the town. Hombleux itself contained then about 1200 inhabitants, and was an industrial as well as an agricultural centre, having a distillery and two refineries for sugar-beets. Of the factories, practically nothing now remains, and of the inhabitants, 250 have survived the German deportations. Zélie, the kitchen maid, has told me of these last. "The first deportation," she said, "was one of five hundred. The officers came to the doors at seven o'clock with the names, and told us to be ready to start at dawn. O Mademoiselle, the night! All the neighbours ran to and fro; all night we washed and sewed and ironed, and in the morning, each with a sack of fresh linen, my father, my sister, M. le Curé,—the flower of our village,—were marched away. And after, what weeping!" Zélie put down her broom to wring her hands, as if still dry-eyed from too much suffering. "The next time," she continued, "the Boches gave us no warning. They came at midnight, and

dragged us from our beds. "Did you then go?" I inquired. "But yes," she replied, and her eyes flashed. "They tried to make us work; there were five of us, friends, from our village. But work for the enemies of France? We would not! They put us in prison; they fed us almost nothing, but we would not work. One day they summoned us. 'Go,' they said, 'go where you like, beasts of the Somme!' Hungry, foot-sore, travelling mostly by night from the frontier, we came home. It was midnight when we reached Hombleux. In my own house, my mother had barred the door. I tapped on the window to wake her. At first, she would not believe that it was I. Even now, she looks at me with a question in her eyes as if asking continually, 'Zélie, is it thou?' "

Our mayors have no such heroic past! They not only saved their own skins, but reside to this day with their wives and daughters; comely daughters of an age for the German draft. Of one it is more than whispered that

he is a spy. Many carrier pigeons he had in his dovecote, and whether there were any connection or not, *he knew of the impending German invasion*, and left his comfortable house and growing crops, to spend the summer of 1914 in Normandy. Nor did he return till the summer of 1917. Meantime, his little hamlet had held a town meeting of its refugees, and elected a lady as mayor. In fact, M. Renet, on his return, found himself the only man in the village. He found also—a suspicious circumstance in the eyes of his neighbours—his house the only one undestroyed. I have talked with him there, looking out of his casement windows into a walled garden, where the fruit trees are uncut, and the walks are still bordered with close-trimmed box. He assumes an injured air, recounting his unpopularity. It is unfortunate, but since M. the Deputy has again asked him to act as mayor, *que voulez-vous?* He is compelled.

His superior, the mayor of the entire commune, did not fare so well. On our first visit,

we found him inhabiting a loft in his partially ruined barn. But despite his chubby person, this mayor is a man of action. Week after week, Hombleux receives shifting regiments of troops back from the trenches *en repos*. These are detailed for construction work. Carpenters set up the *baragues*, which the Government furnishes to homeless families; masons and bricklayers are slowly raising the walls of the village bakery. The mayor has taken his share of the materials and workmen, and is now housed in a two-room lean-to, with a new slate roof, and lace-curtained windows. Here, beside an open fire, he transacts business.

He it is to whom returning refugees come to report and register; through him claims of damage (based on pre-war valuation of property) are filed, which the Government has promised to honor after the war. To him, requests for *baragues* are made, and sent by him to the *Sous-Préfet* of the Department, to be forwarded in turn to the Minister of the

Interior, with whom such matters rest. The mayor calculates the amount of *allocation* or pension to which each family in the devastated area is entitled, varying according as they are *réfugiés* or *rapatriés*, according to the number of bread-winners imprisoned or serving with the colors, according to the number of children, or, in some cases, to the decorations won by their soldiers, for decorations carry pensions.* This entire matter of income is adjusted finally for our district by the *Préfet* at Péronne. Besides housing and pensioning, the Govern-

*Incomes as regulated in August, 1917.

Allocation militaire:

Soldier, 25 c. per day.

Family, 1 fr. 25 c. for mother.

1 fr. 25 c. for child 16 or over.

75 c. for child up to 16.

Allocation de réfugié or chômage:

Adults, 1 fr. 25 c. per day.

Children, 50 c. per day.

War Pensions:

Widows of soldiers, 580 fr. per year.

Children, each, 600 fr. per year.

Réformées:

If wounded, a *réformé* receives a pension.

Médaille militaire:

This carries a pension.

ment has undertaken to supply a certain amount of cereals, coffee, sago and the like. These the mayor distributes. Furniture as well is provided by the Government: bedsteads, mattresses (not forgetting bolsters), stoves, cupboards, chairs, tables and *batteries de cuisine*. Before our coming to take charge of the district, the mayor signed the furniture requisitions which were understood by the fortunate recipients to represent a part of their "*indemnité de guerre*." He also had the even more delicate task of distributing relief supplies left in bulk by the Red Cross or other agencies on their hurried passage through the ruined villages. Naturally, the supply fell short of the demand; and it was with unconcealed pleasure that the Mayor at the instance of the *Sous-Préfet* turned over these two thankless tasks to us. Yet we found him—or rather his wife and daughter—always ready to advise and coöperate. On demand, they furnished immaculately penned lists of all inhabitants, whether grouped by sex and by age, by

family, or by the main division of adults and juveniles. They know the number of families in each hamlet, the number of persons in each family, the name and the age of each. Much more they know, of gossip, and of human nature, and laughed, I fear a trifle derisively, at our manifest difficulties.

All these activities, centring in the Mayor, belong to the civil administration of the Department. The Ministry of Agriculture has its share in reconstruction also, but is more independent of local officials, having an office of its own in the commune. To it belong the ploughing and seeding, the replacing of orchards, and to a certain extent of livestock. But on all these matters, as to whose fields shall be ploughed, or who shall plant two apple trees or own a goat, the verdict of the Mayor is sought. He himself, you may be sure, is dependent on no such circuitous methods. Together with two other *grands cultivateurs*, he has bought an American tractor, a harrow, and a mowing machine. These can even be

hired for the same price as the government-owned tractors, which is forty francs an hectare. Over all reconstruction, considered as a part of the civil administration, preside the *Sous-Préfet* and the *Préfet* of the Somme.

On the other hand, food supplies in general, such as bread, are controlled by the army. In fact, every detail of life in the War Zone is their care if they choose to assume it. Troop movements delay shipments; therefore there may be no bread. Cavalry needs fodder; the sergeant at Hombleux goes out to forage with rick and trio of white horses and buys it at a fixed price. Mme. N—— is ill; the army doctor visits her, and if she seems to him a menace to the health of the soldiers, he removes her to a hospital. In view of the military importance attached to the Zone, the confidence of the French Government in giving over a section of it to the care of a group of American women, wholly unacquainted with the task before them, seems truly touching.

In fact, it seemed appalling, as I learned



revenir
 — Rien que ça de pain ! Vous mangez bien chez vous !
 — Ben... on n'est pas des Boches !

[Only that much bread! You eat well at your house!
 Well . . . we are not Boches!]

from day to day the problems for which I was myself responsible in Canizy. Not the least of these was its mayor. Unlike his *confrère* at B——, M. Thuillard had not fled his property until forced to do so with the rest of the villagers immediately prior to the Retreat of 1917. During the occupation, he kept his store as usual. And even though his horses and cattle, his fat rabbits and plump chickens, were requisitioned by the Germans, they say that he was paid for them. To see him, however, housed in a miserable hut, with a dirt floor so uneven that the very chairs looked tipsy; to hear the complaints of his querulous wife, and the references of his daughter to their former comfort, was calculated to enlist one's sympathy. Mme. Thuillard was ill, and he was lame, and the daughter's husband was a prisoner, and they had lost heavily, because they had the most to lose. All this they told me over the saucerless cups of black coffee which they offered me "out of a good heart."

But when I considered the Mayor's duty

to his village, my own heart hardened. Here is the entry I find in my notebook on my first survey of Canizy. "Canizy, dependence of Hombleux, Thuillard, Oscar, in charge. Curé of Voyennes has charge of the children; 4 k. away. No church, no school, no bread, no water fit to drink." There was something, of course, in the Mayor's own contention that the village had been forgotten; and one could understand why the Curé came only to burials when one saw him,—so ill he looked. But in M. Thuillard's barn were two stout horses, and two carts stood before his door. On his own business, he could travel. "Why, then," I inquired, "has he not fetched the bread supply from Hombleux to which the village is entitled?" "Because he has nothing to gain," and the good wife I interrogated shrugged her shoulders and laughed. "Look you," she continued, "M. Thuillard is rich; 26 kilos of money he buried, and it is not in sous." This rumour, which gave the one-legged Mayor something of the air of a land pirate, I heard

on all sides. Even the school teacher of Hombleux repeated it; and her husband, an officer, nodded his head to emphasize his "*Oui, c'est vrai.*"

Of one of our mayors, however, I would like to record nothing but praise. Widow of a soldier, left with two little girls, and absolutely no other possession in the world, she ruled our home village at the Château with justice and dignity. She never complained. When at last the *baraque* on the ruins of her farm was completed, all except the fitting of the glass in the windows, she insisted on moving in so that we could make use of the space she vacated in our *basse-cour*. I met her one bitter evening shortly afterward, as I was returning from Canizy. "Is it not cold in the *baraque*, Madame?" I asked. "Oh, yes," she replied, "but what would you? It is so good to be at home!"

CHAPTER IV

O CRUX, AVE

AS the aeroplanes fly, Canizy is perhaps three miles from the Château, or reckoned in time, half an hour by motor and an hour on foot. But by either route, one turns into the village at the stark Calvary I have already mentioned, with its half obliterated inscription: *Ave, O Crux*.

At our first visit, despite our novelty, Canizy regarded us with indifference. We seemed to them doubtless one more of those strange manifestations of the war which had stranded them among their ruins. Incurious, apathetic, they passed us with sidelong glances, and went their ways. But this did not last long. The "Dames Américaines" did such extraordinary things! They gathered and bought up rags; they played with the children; they walked

fearlessly, even at night, across the fields to tend a sick baby; they slept—so the village children who had seen their encampment reported—on *lits-soldats*. The village waked to a new interest, and it came about that one expected to be waited for by the gaunt old cross.

Before my arrival, the routeing of our three cars had already been decided. Three times a week the Dispensary was held at Canizy, and once a week, on Monday, our largest truck, turned into a peddler's cart with shining tinware, sabots, soap, fascinators, stockings and other articles of clothing, made there its first stop. On the seat back of the driver and the storekeeper, or if there were not room for a seat, on top of the hampers, went also the children's department, consisting of two members. While the mothers, grandmothers and elder sisters gathered at the honk of the horn about the truck, the children, equally eager, followed the teachers to an open field for games. Or, did it rain, I have seen them of all ages from

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fourteen years to fourteen months, huddled in a shed, listening open-mouthed to the same tales our children love, which begin, in French as in English, with "Once upon a time."

But when, after a three-days' inspection of our outlying domain, I asked our Director for the village of Canizy, I was given charge of all branches of our work there. This meant not interference but close coöperation with the other members of the Unit already occupied with its problems. Of all our villages, Canizy was the most beloved, not, perhaps, because its need was greatest, but because its isolation was most complete. No one could do enough for it. Were a sewing-machine to be repaired, the head of our automobile department, a mechanical genius, spent hours making it "marcher." The doctors, with their own hands, took time to scrub the children's heads. They came to me with every need that they found on their rounds, with the neighbourhood gossip, and with kindly advice. The teachers gave me the names of children requiring shoes; and, as the



- C'est un boué ce blessé là ?
 - Non, m'sieu le Major, c'est le cheval du capitaine .

[Is that wounded man a Boche?
 No, Major, he's the captain's horse.]

roulé

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work developed, asked in turn for recommendations in regard to opening a children's library. To the farm department, I made requests that we buy largely of fodder and vegetables, until we had literally hundreds of kilos of pumpkins, turnips and carrots bedded for us in the cellars, on call. To this department went also requisitions that Mme. Cordier be supplied with a pig, or M. Noulin with five hens, or Mme. Gense with a goat. Or, were there shipments of furniture to be delivered, one called again on the automobile department, which even through the drifts and cold of winter, kept at least one of its engines thawed and running every day.

It will be seen that our scheme of material relief followed closely that laid down by the Government. Our method was simple: where the Government supplies were on hand, or adequate, we used them; whatever was lacking, even up to kitchen ranges costing three hundred francs, we attempted to supply. In this we had not only our own resources to draw on,

but to a limited extent, those of the American Fund for French Wounded, and to a much larger extent, those of the Red Cross. In a huge truck came the goods from the Red Cross, driven by a would-be aviator who, when asked his name, replied bashfully, "Call me Dave." "Dave" was frequently accompanied by another youth of like ambition, named Bill. And I will say that they handled their truck as if it were already a flying-machine. The first consignment of hundreds of sheets and blankets, the truck and the driver, all were overturned in our moat. It took a day to get them out. The next mishap was a head-on collision with our front gate. But the last, which I learned of just before I left, will best illustrate their imaginative turn of mind. Bill, the intrepid, having attempted to traverse a ploughed field, left his machine there mired to the body, and spent the night with us. He seemed a trifle apprehensive as to how his "boss" would take this exploit.

Willing workers, however, were Dave and

Bill. Unannounced, they came exploding up the driveway under orders to work for us all day. And many a time have we risked our necks with them, perched on the high front seat, careering along at what seemed like sixty miles an hour.

But for my part, my usual mode of travel was on foot, and my orbit bounded by the Château, Hombleux and Canizy. In any case, even though I went over by motor, I was dropped at my village and walked back across the fields. As I grew better acquainted with the villagers, I came and went at will, spending almost all the daylight hours—few enough in winter—with them. Every one has heard of the mud in the trenches. The clayey soil of our district, admirably adapted to the making of bricks, lends itself equally well to the making of mud. Continually churned by *camions* and marching troops, it becomes on the highways of the consistency of a purée, through which, high-booted and short-skirted, one wades. It is therefore a relief to turn off

by the footpath beyond Hombleux, though it plunges for the first quarter of a mile through a bog. Of a sunny day, birds sing in the hollow, wee *pinsons* perched on ragged hedges answering one another with fairy flutes. Farther on, yellow-breasted finches dart over patches of mustard as yellow, and sing as they fly. Raucous crows, whose gray-barred wings make them far more decorative than ours, and the even more strikingly marked magpies, darken in great flocks the newly ploughed and seeded wheatfields which in increasing areas border the path. A sudden movement sends them whirring like a black and white cloud against the sky. Often above them courses a flier of another sort, a scout aeroplane probably, holding its way from the aviation fields in our rear, to the front. It rasps the heavens like a taut bow; by listening to the beat of its engines one can determine whether it be French or Boche. For Boche planes come over us frequently, on bombing raids; and sometimes one does not have to look or listen

long to know that an air battle is taking place overhead. The sharp reports; the white puffs of our guns, the black plumes of the enemy's; the glint of the sunlight on careening sails high up in the blue,—it all passes like a panorama, of which we do not know the end. Other sounds also are familiar to us on our plain, when from the Chemin des Dames, or St. Quentin, or Cambrai, the great guns boom. Like surges they shake and reverberate; and when, as often happens, the sea-fog rolls in from the Channel, one can well fancy them the breakers of a mighty storm. So they are, out there, on our front, where the living dyke of the *poilus* holds back the German flood.

The highway and the railway, these are the two most coveted goals of the German bombs. For over them go up the trains of ammunition and of soldiers and supplies. Both we cross on the way to Canizy. The railroad, running between well defined hedges, would seem almost as conspicuous an object as the tree-sentinelled road. But, so far, both have es-

caped harm. Trains whistle and puff as usual up and down from Amiens to Ham. Often I halt at the crossing, to wave to soldiers, who fill the cars; sometimes I pass through companies of red-turbaned, brown Moroccans, who are brought here by the Government to rebuild bridges and keep the roadbed in repair. Over the track the footpath carries one, on over brown stubble, to the Calvary and Canizy.

As I have said, at the Cross one is awaited. Sometimes it is only one little figure in black apron and blue soldier's cap that stands beside it to give the signal; sometimes from the wall on the other side of the road, a half dozen girls start up, like a covey of quail. The boys usually ran away, but the girls advanced to surround one, and dance hand in hand down the street. But always before the Calvary there was a pause. Brown hands, none too clean, were raised to forehead and breast with the quick sign of the cross. One caught a whispered invocation. "But you do not do it," five-year-old Flore protested to me one



- Il est déjà grand !...
- Ben... il a l'âge de la guerre.

[He is big already!
Well . . . he is as old as the war.]

day, with troubled eyes. "Why do you not salute the Calvary?" "Teach me," I replied; and in chorus I learned the words which on the lips of the war-orphaned children are infinitely pathetic: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost."

It is not alone at Canizy that one finds the Cross, though by its aloofness above the plain this one became impressive. By every roadside stands a Calvary, sometimes embowered in trees, but more often stark and naked, with the wantonly felled trunks about its base bearing mute witness to a desecration which respected the form, but not the spirit, of the Christ. At Hombleux, three such crucifixes marked the intersections of the village lanes, flanked by stenciled guide-posts: *A Nesle*, *A Athies*, or *A Roye*. They cluster in the cemeteries, above well-remembered graves; where even the dead no longer rest inviolate, since the Germans, to their unspeakable shame, have blasted open many a tomb. Day by day, the

obsession grows on one that these uplifted symbols of suffering, stripped and mocked and defiled by the invader, typify the crucifixion of Picardy.

CHAPTER V

MME. GABRIELLE

EVERY village, everywhere, has its stronger characters, to whom the community looks up, perhaps unconsciously. Canizy, having been deprived of its normal leaders in the Curé, a prisoner, and the teacher, transferred to the school at Hombleux, looked up in this way to Mme. Lefèvre and Mme. Gabrielle. The former was the especial friend of our medical department. In fact, she rented one of her two rooms for our use as a dispensary, and her flagged kitchen was always open to her neighbours and to us. Here I measured out milk to half the village, or distributed the loaves of bread which we ourselves purveyed from the crabbed Garde Champêtre at Hombleux. Or, had I neither the time nor the patience, Mme. Lefèvre her-

self made the distribution, and gave me a list of the recipients, and always the correct amount of neatly stacked coppers in change. A shrewd face had Mme. Lefèvre, wrinkled by humour as well as by sorrow. She had been taken away by the Boches in their retreat, but later, for some reason unknown, was allowed to return. Her three daughters, however, and her husband, all were in the hands of the enemy. She lived alone, therefore, and busied herself in her late-planted garden, and in her neighbours' affairs.

Most of them, it seemed, were related to her in one way or another, all the Genses being of her kin. Of these there were Mme. Gense-Tabary, already mentioned, and her swarming family of eight, bright and pretty as pictures, and dirty as little pigs. She, lodged near the bank of the canal, really had no excuse for this chronic condition, and was encouraged to scrub by object lessons, clean clothing, and gifts even of long bars of *savon marseilles*. I remember her yet, two or three children tag-

ging at her skirts, knocking at the door of my *baraque* of a Sunday morning, to tell me that she must have more soap. All the way from Canizy she had walked to get it; and she did not go back without. Mme. Gense-Tabary's eldest daughter, known as Germaine Tabary, was the sorrow of the village, even more than its daughters who had gone into captivity; for she had become an earlier victim of the invaders, and with her unborn baby was left behind. Mme. Marie Gense, another unfortunate, was a niece by marriage of Mme. Lefèvre's. Her husband was a soldier. She had lived in a little cottage whose blue and white tiled floor I often had occasion to admire, next the church. But being left with two growing boys, and no resources, what was she to do? What she did was to add to her family a Paul, and one bitter winter night which our doctors and nurses well remember, a Paulette. "What would you?" she expostulated. "I had no bread for the children; in this way they were fed." That two more mouths were

dren as cunning as you could wish to see, clean—as were Marie's—and sunny-tempered. Their parentage also was a mystery. But this blot did not rest by rights on the village escutcheon. Mme. Payelle had been installed there by one of her admirers, a soldier *en permission*; she really did not belong to Canizy.

To keep her social position in the midst of these misfortunes was a tribute to Mme. Lefèvre's worth. She was always doing kindnesses, and speaking to us on her neighbours' behalf. Beneath her shed stood one of the four *chaudières*, or washing cauldrons, which survived the general destruction. These, varying in capacity from 50 to 250 litres, are an indispensable utensil of housekeeping in Picardy. In them, week by week, the soiled clothes are boiled. Not even the lack of a pump—and there was only one left in the village—was so much deplored as the loss of the cauldrons. In view of these two handicaps and the dearth of soap, the squalor of the village on our arrival seems excusable. Mme.

Lefèvre, at least, did her share toward remedying it. Without charge, her *chaudière* was in constant use, and her shed became a neighbourhood rendezvous.

It will be seen that all the Genses were by no means a bad lot, Mme. Lefèvre being one herself. Of an older generation, and I know not of what degree of kinship to her, is Mme. Hélène Gense, grandmother to Mme. Gabrielle, that energetic, substantial young widow, not Mme. Thuillard nor yet Veuve Thuillard, but Mme. Gabrielle to all Canizy. In pre-war times, she owned, through her parents and not by marriage, the most central homestead in the village. There remain now only the arched gate into the courtyard, the brick rabbit hutches, a heap of débris, and a tottering wall. She and ten-year-old Adrien lodge, therefore, in the first house on the left as you come past the Calvary, with Grand'mère Gense. This ell, flanked though it is by the ruin of the main building, is the most cheerful spot in the village. The narrow yard before the door is

swept; a row of geraniums blossoms beneath the windows. Above all, there *are* windows, two of them, and curtains at each. Outside the door, if you are fortunate in the hour of your call, will stand two pairs of worn sabots. Or perhaps the door may be open, framing Grand'mère, bent almost at right angles, Mme. Gabrielle, and Bobbinot. Bobbinot is a dog, iron-grey, smooth-coated, with a white band on his breast and a white vest. He has no pedigree, his mistress assures me, but his brown eyes and his square, intelligent head bear out her statement that he is "*très loyal*." All three welcome me; a chair is proffered near the fire. Grand'mère sinks carefully into her low seat, Mme. Gabrielle sets on a saucepan of coffee, and we sit down to chat.

It is a pleasure to look about as we talk. On the mantel, to give a note of colour, are laid a row of tiny yellow pumpkins; the floor is red, and through the window peer red geraniums. In a cupboard beyond the stove is a modest array of pans and dishes. Two panes

of glass, like portholes, pierce the wall to the rear. Beneath stands a sideboard, and a little to one side, a round table. Not until the coffee was heated did I notice that cups were set for four.

"But have you another guest?" I inquired, as Mme. Gabrielle poured first some syrup from a bottle, and then the steaming drink. "But no, only Adrien. *Adrien, come!*" She raised her voice. Then for the first time I saw the boy, head propped on elbows, poring over a book. The mother regarded him indulgently. "It is a pity for the children that we have no school. Adrien is apt; when the Germans were here, he understood everything, everything. And when the Scotch came, he learned, too. I myself try to learn English." She brought forth from the sideboard an English-French phrase book. "This I found in a house after the English soldiers went away. It would be easy, but there is the pronunciation." "I will teach you," I said, and we took up the words one by one, Grand'mère laughing

the while, pleasant laughter, like a cracked, old bell. But the boy kept on reading and hummed a tune. "The children," broke in the mother, "they sing; it is well." But presently the boy shuts his book with a sigh and draws a chair to the table. "Did you like it, the story?" I inquire. "Yes, it tells of America." On the table, clear now save for Adrien's belated cup, is revealed an oilcloth map in lieu of a linen cover. "Where, then, is America?" His finger traces the colored squares. "Here is France, here England, here Italy, here Russia,—but America, it is so far one cannot see it." "But yes," rejoins his mother, "so far that never in my life did I expect to see an American. Once in my childhood I remember looking at a picture of M. Pierpont's bank in New York—a great bank. But now I have seen Germans, Russians, English, Moroccans,—and you. The war teaches many things."

"You have seen Russians?"

"Very many; the Germans worked our fields with Russian prisoners. A strange people!

You and I converse; we come from different countries, but we have ideas in common. The Russians were like dumb beasts; they had no *esprit de corps*."

"It is the fault of their government," I venture.

"Yes," she replied, "France and America are republics. It is not that our government is perfect. There are many beautiful things in France, but there is much injustice also, much."

I knew of what Mme. Gabrielle was thinking, then; of the wheatlands of Canizy, where not one furrow had been turned for the next year's harvest, while the *grands cultivateurs* and the petty politicians looked out for themselves; and of the school building, long promised and still delayed.

But Mme. Gabrielle looked beyond the confines of her small village and its grievances. Love for *la belle plaine* and *la belle France*, unreasoning, passionate, pulsed in her. Hatred of the Germans was its corollary.

"Mademoiselle, during the occupation, we were prisoners," she said. "We had to have passes to go one fourth of a kilometre from our village. My mother was sick at Voyennes,—and I could not go to see her." It came out that Bobbinot had been her constant companion. "But I should think," I said, "that the Germans would have taken him away." "They dared not; he would have bitten them!" was the spirited response.

At Mme. Gabrielle's table, with the map upon it, I was destined to sit often, sometimes for luncheon and sometimes for dinner, while we took counsel over village affairs. For Mme. Gabrielle, together with Mme. Lefèvre, and the former school teacher, became an informal advisory committee to me. Through punctiliously served courses of soup, stew, salad, wine, cheese and coffee, Mme. Gabrielle offered her information, or, when asked, her opinion. It was she who reassured me on the point of selling rather than of giving the smaller articles we distributed. "I under-

stand completely; it is better for us. The American Red Cross did the same when the Germans were here. They sold the food, but very cheap. Without their help, we should have starved. We are grateful to America, which saved our lives." It was she who advised in regard to a baby whom its half-witted mother had placed in a crèche: "For the mother," she said, "it would doubtless be better that the child returned. But for the child—and I am a mother myself who speak—let it remain." On the good sense and the good heart of Mme. Gabrielle one came to rely. Even as far as Hombleux she was known and respected. "O yes," the women there told me, "Mme. Gabrielle, we know her. She is *une femme très forte*."

CHAPTER VI

VOILÀ LA MISÈRE

DIRECTLY opposite Mme. Gabrielle lives Mme. Odille Delorme. One lifts the latch of a heavy wooden gate to enter her courtyard. On left and right are the remains of barn and stable, from the rafters of which depend bundles of *haricots* hung to dry. A half dozen chickens scurry from under foot, and at the commotion Mme. Delorme steps out. "I have come to make a little visit," I begin. "Enter then, and see misery," is her reply. It is a startling reply from this woman, strong, intelligent, and direct. The room of which she throws open the door is tiny; the floor is of earth; there is no window, only a hole covered with oiled linen, which lets in a ray of light but never any sun. A stove, a table, two stools, a shelf or two and a few dishes hung on

nails are her furnishings. In her arms she holds her sixteen-months' baby; a little girl of three comes running in from an adjoining alcove, and is followed presently by her seven-year-old sister, Charmette. The three children look like plants blanched in a cellar. As gently as possible, I proceed with necessary questions: for in social parlance, I am making a preliminary survey of the family needs. "Your husband?" I inquire. She turns to her little girl, "Marie, tell the lady, then, where is Papa." And Marie, smiling up into her mother's face, repeats her lesson proudly, "*Avec—les—Boches.*" "*Avec les Boches,*" reiterates the mother, and catches the child to her in a passionate embrace. There is a pause before I can continue. "Have you beds and covers?" "See for yourself, Mademoiselle," and she leads the way through her *ménage*; three passage-ways opening the one into the other, like the compartments of a train. The first contains a child's bed of white enamel, and beneath an aperture like that in the outer room,

a crib. Both are canopied and ruffled in spotless white. "Yes," Mme. Delorme says in answer to my unspoken surprise, "I bought these beds. The ruffles are made of sheets, one can but do one's best. As you see, it is only a chicken-house after all." Beyond, quite without light, is a space occupied by her own bed, a springless frame of planks. From nails in the walls clothes of all sizes and descriptions hang. In fact, one wonders at the amount of clothing saved by the panic-stricken peasants in their flight. They not only took away with them heavy sacks made out of sheets, but buried what they had time to. Of course, some of their hiding places were rifled; but most of the villagers have a real embarrassment of riches in their old clothes. Their first request is usually for a wardrobe, so that the mice will not nest in them.

But Mme. Delorme asked for nothing. She rested her case in the simple statement, "*Voilà la misère.*" At a later date, when I returned with a camera, she repeated, "What would

you? Take a picture of our misery?" "Yes, Madame, to carry with me to America, that they may see it there and fight the harder for knowing what the Boches have done." "*Eh, bien!*" she replied, and the picture was taken. Framed in the deep gateway, from which the clusters of dried beans depend like a stage curtain, her baby in her arms, her two little girls clinging beside her, and neighbourly Adrien, broom in hand, sweeping the light snow from the path,—I see her yet amid the ruins, brave, broken-hearted Odille Delorme.

Before the war, Mme. Delorme had not the social position of her neighbour, Mme. Gabrielle. She lived on her smaller property, and attended to her truck garden and her poultry yard and her children, while her husband served the Government as bargeman on the canal. Yet the two were close friends. Mme. Gabrielle having bought a cow, shared the milk with Mme. Delorme. Mme. Gabrielle told me that Mme. Delorme needed blankets. "She would never admit it," she ex-

plained. "We are not used to accepting gifts, you see." Or were it necessary for Mme. Delorme to go to Ham perhaps for her *allocation*, Mme. Gabrielle transferred the baby and Marie to her kitchen until their mother's return.

From this extreme end of the village, by the Calvary, the street continues across the railroad track. Here, on almost any day, children may be seen digging miniature coal mines. They do it not in play, but in earnest. The ties which the Germans left have long since been used as fuel, but in the roadbed the villager still finds a scant supply of coal. Beyond the track, the first habitable building is a barn. Its interior consists of one room, earthen-floored where two makeshift beds allow it to be seen. In one corner stands a small stove. No light enters except from the open door. Here lodge the old mother, the married daughter, two children, a girl of seventeen and a boy of eleven, and their orphaned cousin, four-year-old Noël. Lydie, capable,

red-cheeked, crisp-haired, welcomes us and pulls forward a bench. "Be seated, please." Her voice has a ring of youth, her mouth a ready smile. One wonders how it can be, yet it is so. The grandmother complains querulously from the untidy bed where she is lying to keep warm. Lydie tells us with perfect equanimity that she herself has no bed. Where does she sleep? On the bench. Beds would be welcome, yes, and sheets and blankets. The grandmother adds a request for warm slippers; her feet are so often cold. A pane of glass for the door I set down also in the list in my notebook, and as assets—the furniture being negligible—300 kilos of cabbages, 100 kilos of potatoes, leeks and chicory in smaller quantities.

My next call I have been urged to make by our doctors. Here in a ramshackle ell, facing a court deep in mire, live the poorest family in the village, comprising Mme. Laure Tabary, her six children, and a black and bearded goat. The goat inhabits a rabbit hutch from



Rouillon

*- Avant ... quand c'était pas la guerre...
on en avait deux pour un sou, des pralines !...*

[Once, before the war, the pralines were two for a sou.]

which her tether allows her the freedom of the narrow brick path. From the sidelong gleam in her eyes, one always expects an attack in the flank or rear. But Madame, her mistress, regards her as a pet; perhaps because she cannot regard her in any other favourable light,—since *la petite* gives no milk. Once past the goat, the door is quickly gained. Two rooms has Mme. Tabary, and a loft and a shed. She needs them! From forlorn Olga to forlorn Andréa, the girls of the family descend in graduated wrappings of rags. “O, Mme. Tabary,” exclaimed the school teacher, with whom I discussed the all too evident need of soap, and of clothing, “she is a very worthy woman, but she is always poor.” Always poor, always ailing, yet always humorous, were the Laure Tabarys. Did the unfortunate woman try to boil her washing, the stove must needs break, and the cauldron full of scalding water descend upon Madeleine. No sooner were her wounds dressed than Andréa developed a fever. It would be interesting to know how

many litres of gasoline were consumed by us in the carrying of Mme. Tabary's children to and from hospitals located ten and twenty miles away. One would have thought the distracted mother might welcome these deportations. But, naturally enough, she distrusted them, and having faithfully promised to give up the baby to our care on a certain day, left instead for Ham. Of how she was won over, —that is a tale which belongs to the annals of the medical department rather than to me. But I have heard rumours of hair ribbons and dolls and candy and fairy stories and I know not what of similar remedies which Hippocrates and Galen never mentioned. Judge, then, whether our doctors were bugbears or no among the children of our villages!

But the ell housed another family besides the Tabarys. Across the hall lodged the Moroy's; M. Edouard, an old man of eighty-four, his niece and nephew and his granddaughter, Mlle. Suzanne. All lived in the one room. It was a room with only three corners

as well, because in the fourth the floor rose in an arch which indicated the cellar-way. In this room were three beds, a table, a stove, three chairs and a broken sewing machine. Yet I never saw the room in disorder, nor heard any requests from the family beyond that of a little sugar for Grandpère, and, if possible, another bed, so that Charles might have a place to sleep. Meantime, Charles slept upon the floor. In this room were two windows. The one to the south interested me by chance, because the panes looked so clear. I stepped over and put out my hand. It went straight through the framework; there was no glass. "But you must be cold!" I exclaimed, knowing well the common fear of *courants d'air*. Besides, it was late October, and the nights were already frosty. "Yes, a little," Mlle. Suzanne admitted in a matter of fact way. "Yes," agreed her aunt, in a more positive tone. "And besides, Mademoiselle, our stove is too small, as you see. In fact, it is not ours, but belongs to Mme. Tabary. But she has so large

a family, we made an exchange. Perhaps when you distribute stoves——” I promise to remember, wondering the while if we in like circumstances would share our last crusts with like generosity. For the window, so scarce was glass, oiled linen was the best that could be done, a pity considering that it excluded the sun with the cold.

Mlle. Suzanne, with the exception of Germaine Tabary and Lydie Cerf, is the only young woman in Canizy. She had been taken captive by the Germans, but was allowed to return. Her family, however, met an unknown fate; father and brother, they were *avec les Boches*. A curious circumstance in this connection was that Suzanne, having been an independent worker, received no pension for her loss. She, too, seemed a Good Samaritan to her neighbours—lame Mme. Juliette depends on Suzanne to bring her her pitcher of milk; Mme. Musqua, sick and irresponsible, has only to send over her children to Mlle. Suzanne to be cared for,—what matter two

more or less in the crowded room? I added my quota to her labours by asking her to take charge of washing rags, and started her in with those of her next-door neighbour, Mme. Tabary. For the purpose, I have given her a cylindrical boiler, standing three feet high. This, when not in use, is placed over by the cellar-way. On washing days, it is set on an open fire in the court, where Grandpère feeds it with labouriously chopped twigs. Meantime, back of the house, patches of colour and of flapping white begin to adorn the wire fence. Suzanne also sews, by hand and, now that its frame is mended by I know not how many screws in the warped wood, by machine. We give out the sewing, and she earns by it perhaps three francs a week.

Beyond the Moroy's, lives Mme. Thuillard, Charles; as the neighbours call her to distinguish her from the Thuillards, O. I have seldom found this energetic lady at home, but I often see her, and sometimes hear her, as she passes with firm step down the street to work

in her garden. When not playing, her ten-year-old granddaughter Orélie follows in her wake. This leaves in the unlighted recesses of the barn, her husband, M. Charles. He seems an apologetic and conciliatory soul, with whom I discuss domestic needs, such as a window, a lamp, and sheets for the beds. He will tell his wife what I say and report to-morrow when he comes for the milk. It is in his entrance-way, so to speak, that I first noticed a pile of willow-withed market baskets. "O, yes," he said, "I had hundreds of such, but the Boches took them." "Are they then made hereabouts?" "Before the war; but now no one is left who understands the trade." The next day I am likely to get a report, and a sharp one, from Madame, his wife. "Sheets," she queries, "what sort of sheets? Are they linen sheets? Blankets. Are they wool? Are they white? Look you, before the war, I had five dozen linen sheets and plenty of blankets and down quilts of the finest quality. Keep your gifts about which you make so much talk!

I will have none of them, none of them at all!"

I have sometimes wondered if Madame were related to the contrary-minded but equally independent wife of the *garde champêtre* who distributes—or not—at her pleasure, the communal supply of bread. "I hear," she began one day, as I waited for change for a hundred franc note—change which came in gold, by the way, as well as in silver—"I hear that you are to make a distribution of gifts. Do not forget me! I will receive anything, but you understand, not for payment; only as a present. Behold," this with a playful slap on the shoulder, "any one will tell you that I have a tongue. O, là, là, là!"

CHAPTER VII

NOUS SOMMES DIX

IT was at Christmas time that we came most to realise the broken family circles in all our villages. There was not one household which did not have some hostage *avec les Boches*. Of the pitiful remnant, the old men—there were no young ones—were to me the most appealing. I shall never forget the fête in the hill village of Douilly, well up to the front, a village completely destroyed, whose inhabitants were living in cellars. On the brow of the hill, facing the sunset, stood the white stone church. It had been used by the Germans as a barracks, and had not been reconsecrated, so that we were given permission to hold our party there. Cold, bare, yet beautiful with the sunlight falling in rainbow colours on the groined arches, was the old church.

At the bases of the pillars, we deposited our sacks of presents; most of them for the children, but one each for the women and the men. The latter were in my charge. Only three came hobbling up from the outskirts of the crowd. "But is this all?" I asked, as they chose the size of package which seemed to each most desirable. "Are there no other men in the village?" The old men consulted together. "There is Grandpère Cordon," suggested one, "and Jean, who has rheumatism," "and blind Pierre——" "*Nous sommes dix*," came the answer, finally. "Shall we take the presents to the rest?"

"*Nous sommes dix!*" It was the answer which might have been made in Canizy. According to the number of inhabitants, it might represent the proportion of the male population left anywhere in the *région dévastée*. Not one was able-bodied. In Canizy there were, for example, the lame mayor of whom I have spoken; his four contemporaries, verging on sixty, one a heavy drinker, another one-armed,

a third in need of an operation, a fourth suffering from heart disease. Even the latter had been taken away, but as he said, when the German doctor put down his ear to listen, he threw up his hands, and gave the officers a good piece of his mind for having imported a useless consumer of food. So he was encouraged to make his way back.

Of an older generation are two of the servants of the Château, the one the feeble gardener, the other the bedridden husband of the laundress, who has not worked for many years. There is M. Tabary also, the grandfather of Germaine, who has his own peculiar sorrow in his granddaughter's visible disgrace. A Boche baby will never outlive its stigma while the memory of the Great War remains. M. Tabary is sick and frail. It was he who, persuaded at last to come to the Dispensary, paused in going out to doff his old cap with a courtly bow and to address the doctors with a "*Merci, mes demoiselles, merci; je suis content.*"

It was a fortunate circumstance, however,—for I cannot think it intentional on the part of the Germans—that all of these old men, more or less in need of care, had either wives or other feminine relatives to give it to them. Not so circumstanced was M. Augustin. Smooth-shaven save for a white fringe of beard, his fresh-coloured but anxious face appeared one day at the Château. Thither he had gone to deliver a load of hay. But the particular lady who had contracted to buy it being unexpectedly absent, M. Augustin was disturbed. His language gave one an impression of vigour which was borne out by subsequent acquaintance. On the saint's day of the village, he shared honours with young Lydie in being the life of the party, by contributing a song and a quaint peasants' dance. He was to be met with frequently along the roads, with blue-visored cap, brown corduroys and stout cane. As his neighbours said: "*M. Augustin, il voyage toujours partout.*" Still, he took time to do chores, like chopping wood for Mme.

Juliette, to hoe in his garden, and to keep his house. The latter was, strictly speaking, a shed. It had two windows, however, through which, in the absence of the owner, I made inventory. A broken stove was propped against a home-made chimney; a plank table stood beneath the window; a chair, and a rough chest completed the furniture. On the table, instead of a lamp, was a bottle containing a candle; beside it were a bowl and a frying pan.

Chiefly from the neighbours, I learned that M. Augustin was a widower, that he had been the village cobbler, and that he preferred to live alone. Now, we had shoe-making tools among our stores, so one day I asked him if he would not like some. "No, Mademoiselle, I thank you," he replied. "My eyes are no longer clear; I cannot see well." I was more successful with other suggestions, however. A little nest of dishes pleased him greatly; a new stove was installed, and a bed, and what was perhaps even more greatly appreciated, a lamp. The evidence of his appreciation took

the form of whitewash on walls and ceiling; the cobwebs vanished from the windows; and a shelf appeared for the dishes behind the stove. It may be that M. Augustin will now be more content with his own fireside, and less drawn to visit the wineshops of Ham and Nesle.

I never saw M. Augustin at mass, where the village transformed itself on occasion from weekday caps and kerchiefs and sabots to its conventional and unbecoming best. Therefore I must needs infer that his face was shaven daily, and his suit always clean, for his own satisfaction. The moral stamina shown by this is noteworthy, and characteristic of the peasantry of our district. We ourselves in our living conditions found cleanliness next to godliness in this respect at least, in that it was hard to attain. But *cui bono* seemed never to have disturbed the habits of M. Augustin.

Another sprightly old gentleman was M. Touret. His quarters were more spacious than those of his neighbour, for he lived in a barn. Overhead, hay piled from eaves to roof-

tree helped to keep out the cold, and there was one window. As he himself said when asked if he wanted anything: "What would you? I am warm; I have a chair, a stove and a bed. If the young people were here—perhaps. But we who are old, we shall not live long, we have enough." M. Touret, however, did not live alone. The mother of his son's wife had taken pity on him after the Germans deported his two sons and their families, and had invited him to share her barn. There were three housed there altogether, for with them lived her son. M. Touret was oftenest found on a bench between the window and the stove, poring through his spectacles over the daily paper. Mme. Clara was usually busy with some savoury cooking, and M. Albert on the occasion of my first visit held the centre of the floor with saw-horse and axe. A chair was offered at once, and we all sat down to talk. M. Touret, however, kept glancing at his paper, or regarded us over the rims of his spectacles. Presently he broke in: "As for you, I do not

know what you may be, but as for me, I am a Christian." In the midst of a conversation about fodder and furniture, the effect was arresting, until one realised from his point of view the strangeness of our position. What, he must have queried, are these young American women doing here? We were certainly different from the French ladies of family who nursed the soldiers, or took over whole communities to house and feed. French women would never have walked as we did, muddy-shoed and knapsacked, alone over the fields. They might have been more understanding, at least their ways would have been more conventional and better understood.

In fact, on another occasion M. Touret asked me why I had come to France. "Monsieur, my father was a soldier; I cannot fight, but in this war I, too, want to help." "Your father was a soldier? Ah yes, that would be in the Civil War, in '64—I remember it well. And what rank did he hold? Was he a general?" "But no, Monsieur; only a common

soldier." "A common soldier?" He thought a moment. "But not like ours, because in America you are not a military nation, and depend on volunteers." My face must have expressed astonishment. "Look you, Mademoiselle; before the war it was my habit to read. I read every year as many as two hundred volumes. I had a large library in a cabinet. The Germans burned my books." He rose, picked up something from a bench behind the stove and handed it to me. It proved to be a charred and mildewed copy of a history; the history of England in the time of Henry the Eighth. Mutilated as it was, the pages showed a beautiful clear type and exquisite engravings. It was a good example of the printing of Abbeville, famous for its engravers and binders since the days of its first printing press in 1484.

"Would you not like some books, then?" I ventured.

"What sort of books? Not magazines." He looked contemptuously at one that I had in

my hand. "Me, I like stories. See what I bought yesterday." He brought from a chest of drawers a gaudy paper volume entitled "La Morte d'Amour."

Knowing that our library contained no such light literature, I continued, "Would you perhaps like Dumas?"

"Dumas? 'The Three Musketeers'?" His wrinkled face lighted. "I know them. Another book I liked the Germans loaned me when they were here. It was by an Englishman—B-u-l-w-e-a-r—"The Last Days of Pompeii"—a very interesting book."

"Tell me," he went on a little later, "some one has said that you have no twilight in North America. Is it true?"

It seeming in his mind to be a reflection upon our country, I tried my best to dissipate this impression by citing the great size of the United States, and its varying climatic conditions. But I could not truthfully say that we had the lingering orange sunsets and afterglows of pink and mauve and applegreen

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which I knew were in his mind, and with which I too became familiar on the plain of Picardy.

The last time I saw M. Touret was on a white and wintry morning when I had risen even earlier than the villagers or M. the chaplain, to attend the village mass. In a golden-brown corduroy which might have been the twin of M. Augustin's, I spied M. Touret on the path ahead of me, homeward bound after the service. I ran to catch up.

"Good morning, Monsieur, and how are you?"

"O, *doucement, doucement*," he answered. "And you?"

"The books, did you like them?" I inquired, for his Christmas present had consisted of three.

"O, well enough; but one was not true. It was called 'Contes de la Lune.' I did not read it. Another (this in reference to Tourgueniev) was by a Russian; and you know well, in France we do not love Russia now. A Rus-

sian indeed! The third,—well Jules Verne is always interesting. *Ça ira.*”

Somewhat discouraged, I recalled what Mme. Clara had told me once in an effort to soften the old man's brusqueness. “He is old; he is full of crotchets, you understand.” But Madame herself appeared to me to be quite as old, though I had the wit not to compliment her politeness thus maladroitly. Perhaps it was because of this honesty, entirely unaffected, that of all the households in my village, I enjoyed most hers and M. Touret's. There one found a freeborn fellowship, which, like the mellow twilight, belongs to Picardy. It is a *timbre* resonant in the older generation; that generation which endured the invasion of 1870, as well as the invasion of 1914. It is a survival of many wars, of many hardships, a spirit akin to that fortitude which has made our own country,—a common language that we, who came from the ends of the earth, could understand.

CHAPTER VIII

UNE DISTRIBUTION DE DONS

AT length, the survey of Canizy was completed: its crooked streets traced on a map, its houses numbered, and the pre-war and the post-war status of each of its families noted thereon. But long before these facts had been collected, the articles found to be most necessary had been bought for the homes. It only remained to wait their arrival. Even the number of sheets and blankets in each household was listed, and against them, the number to be given out. The honesty and unselfishness of most of the villagers in setting down their needs, was a constant joy. There was Mme. Regina, for instance, who had five pairs of stout linen sheets and four soldiers' blankets on two Boche beds. I proposed a new bed for the baby, and covers to go with

it. Mme. Regina acquiesced at first, but later drew me aside: "I can get along," she said, "I know you have not enough to go around,—and when one is so poorly lodged anyway, it does not matter. When I get my *baraque*, then I will come to you."

There was good sense in Mme. Regina's decision. The housing rested not with us, but with the Government, through the mayor of the commune. Long delay ensued in Canizy, when ten families had applied, and only three *baraqués* had been set up. Of these, two were for the domestics of M. Lanne. Mme. Picard and the Mayor himself were among the waiting; nor could one decide which was the more miserably off. Even Mme. Picard's vegetables were comfortably bedded compared with her children, in her dark and windy barn, and as for M. le Maire, a water-spout built within his hut carried the rain from his bed. But at last one day, loads of *baraqués* began to arrive, and red-fezzed Moroccans, to erect them. There were five shacks in all, and four,

it transpired, were for Mme. Picard and M. Thuillard. I could understand that Mme. Picard had need of her two apartments, but the Mayor,—well, he wished to reopen his store. And his wife, all smiles at their prospective installation, offered me myself a guest room so that I could live in my village at last. But this offer was tendered before the distribution of gifts.

It was Dave, or strictly speaking, the Red Cross, which made possible an early allotment of blankets and sheets in Canizy. Though they had been overturned in the mud, even Mme. la Maire did not complain of their condition. "It matters nothing; they can be washed," she said. On the day we had chosen, word was passed to each family that a distribution would be made at Mme. Lefèvre's at four that afternoon. There was no need of a *garde champêtre* such as they had in Esmery-Hallon to cry the news. The children flew with it; the mothers halted at the corners to talk about it; and at four o'clock, when the

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jitney drove in with its wonderful cargo, a line like a bread-line had formed in front of the door. Mme. Lefèvre herself came out to help us; the older boys lent a hand, and within five minutes, piles of single blankets and double blankets, and single sheets and double sheets, were ready to be given out. Then a window was opened and the names were called. "Mme. Carlier: 6 blankets; 3 single sheets; 3 double sheets." "Mme. Lecart: 3 double sheets, 2 blankets." So ran the list. One after another the mothers stepped forward, received their quota and went away. There were order, good nature, and no unkind comment. Even afterwards, there seemed to be little dissatisfaction. The distribution had been made, as every one knew, on the basis of actual need, and the result was accepted as just. If Mme. Lefèvre had only one blanket, that was because she had plenty of linen sheets, much better than the cotton ones we gave, a woollen blanket, and a warm red eiderdown quilt. Only the mayor's wife and that very human

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lady, Mme. Charles Thuillard, of whom I have before spoken, raised protesting voices,—but such was their bent.

Our first distribution having gone so well, and we being still received as friends, we proceeded to the second, which consisted of cast-iron beds and stoves. The single beds we had been fortunate enough to buy ourselves; but the double beds and the stoves came from M. le Sous-Préfet and were signed for by the recipients as a part of their *indemnité de guerre*. Heavy loads these articles made, and Dave and his truck were requisitioned for the day. We first had to secure the double beds, which were stored, together with other civilian supplies, at the Moroccan camp at Nesle. To Nesle, then, we tore, coasting the long hills, and chugging up the inclines as if the Germans themselves were in pursuit. Arrived at the camp, we found that we had not made the proper entry, and must reverse, disentangle ourselves from the railroad embankment, plough through mud to the axles,

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and back up to the warehouse at the other end of the yard. All this Dave did. Bedsteads, mattresses and bolsters were then piled aboard. Dave and one of my comrades precariously balanced on the front seat, and I high on the load, expecting a landslide every minute, we steamed away for Canizy. A house to house visitation with a truck down its narrow and uneven streets was also an adventure, and we were thankful enough when the day ended with only minor injuries, and every family that needed them supplied with beds. Stoves were simpler, for the reason that they were smaller. Wardrobes, buffets, chairs and tables would have followed, could we have secured them. But these, even when I left, had not yet been crossed off the village lists.

Failing to obtain furniture, we distributed clothing, for by this time the winter was well upon us. Individual families had been taken care of before as the need arose. In order not to pauperize, or hurt the genuine self-respect of the people, I tried a plan known by

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them as "an arrangement," whereby I took vegetables, or rags, in exchange. This system of barter was also one of coöperation with our travelling store, which supplied the wants of families able—and glad—to buy. The coming of the store made a red-letter day, like a market-day, in the village. Even the soldiers gathered around, commenting humorously on the bargains, and urging the ladies to buy. They asked on their own part for mufflers or sabots or cigarettes. Once a small tradesman, transformed by his uniform in appearance but not in nature, wondered audibly how long we thought we could remain in business and lose in each purchase from a third to a half of its value. Our storekeeper laughed. "*Toujours*, M. Soldat," she answered, and forthwith beguiled a hesitant grandmother into buying an entire bar of laundry soap at four francs instead of twelve.

But our "arrangements" did not lack humour or interest. There was Mme. Laure, for example, who was purposely absent when we

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brought the new clothing for her family, and undressed and bathed it and filled the boiler in turn with what we had taken off; and Mme. Gense-Tabary who conspired with her husband to get vegetables in Ham and resell to us at a higher price in payment for her dozens of new garments, and Mme. Payell who, hearing a rumour that we were about to outfit her babies, bought extra buttons to have them ready to sew on. There was also conscientious Mme. Regina, with her box of clean rags all ready for the new suit we gave fifteen-year-old Raymond.

The purpose of the rag industry was twofold: to clear the cluttered interiors, and with the rags themselves to make rag rugs. After Mlle. Suzanne's washing, the clean pieces went to a class of three young girls, who met once a week, divided the stock, and sewed and braided the strands. To them went also the snippings of the hundreds of garments we cut and let out through the district to be sewed. A pretty picture my girls made of a Tuesday afternoon

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around the big table in Mme. Noulin's store; Elmire fair and delicate as a lily, Albertine black-haired and black-eyed, and quick, graceful, thirteen-year-old Cécile. Fingers and tongues were busy. Mme. Noulin herself bustled in and out, and finally served us with the inevitable coffee. This ceremony concluded the lesson. But the yards of braiding grew week by week,—though not without some small heart-burning and rivalry. "Cécile," Elmire complained, "takes all the longer pieces and gives me only the scraps. Perhaps Mademoiselle would speak to her." But it was the Government which unintentionally interfered most with my rags. I had bespoken the mayor's hut for our headquarters as soon as he was ready to move out. Only a few feet from the best well, where we planned to install our new pump and our village *chaudière*, it was to be a centre of neighbourhood industry. But the mayor still waits on opportunity and the rags still wait in sacks.

As winter advanced, it became obvious, even

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at mass, that Canizy went cold. The children's noses and mittenless hands were red. True, there was Mme. Gabrielle, who came in furs and smart black hats; and several other ladies sufficiently warm if rather rusty and old-fashioned. But one noted among the children an absolute lack of the capes which are the characteristic dress of French school children. Throats wrapped in mufflers, hands thrust into pockets or skirts,—this was their method of keeping warm. The older boys especially looked pinched in trousers which had become too short, and tightly buttoned, threadbare coats. One day, when a biting wind and a powdery snow impressed their discomfort upon me, I made a raid on our storeroom, with the entire permission of my colleague in charge. Woollen shirts, stockings, caps, overcoats and suits, whatever article of warmth I could find, I gathered up. The roads were too drifted for the truck, or for walking, but I had asked for the horse and wagon. Carlos, our soldier, helped me pack my plunder, and

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conveyed me on my way. But a difficult way it proved to be, and it was not until nearly twilight that we drew up at Mme. Lefèvre's door, too late to distribute that night. I left the warm clothing in her care, asking her at the same time to make me a list of those to whom she thought it ought to go, and promising to return the following day. But Mme. Lefèvre's enthusiasm exceeded her instructions. When I came, she met me with a triumphant smile. "I knew, Mademoiselle, that it would please you were the clothes on the backs of the poor children. Voilà, I have given the clothing according to the list." A cramped and illiterate list it was she handed me, devoid of capitals, but it accounted for every article, even to a boy's coat given to Lydie Cerf. "Lydie?" I queried mentally, yet not for the world would I have questioned or criticised good Mme. Lefèvre. Lydie herself I did question. "But, yes, Mademoiselle," she replied, "I am keeping the coat for Papa. He is with the Boches. It will be ready for him when he returns."

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When they return! It was a phrase on every lip. "If the children were here, it would be different." "No, I do not wish to touch my indemnity. I and my wife, we are saving it for the boys when they come home." "Madoiselle, I need another bed." "But you have two." "Yes, but there is my mother, who may return any day." So ran the undercurrent of longing in every family, mutilated as were the apple trees girdled in the orchards, uprooted, like them, and left for dead.

For my next distribution, which was to be a more important one, I went to Mme. Gabrielle. "Madame," said I, "it is true, is it not, that the parents of most of the children have enough money to buy capes?" "Yes," she admitted. "But it is not true that they will not do so?" "Yes; there are so many things to buy when one has lost so much. We fear to spend the money." "Very well. Will you make me out a list for all the world?" The list was made; a list so orderly that it could be used as a shopping guide. Coats for the wo-

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men and capes for the children were bought, including a coat for Lydie Cerf. They were brought down by our own truck, which had made a special trip to Amiens in the bitterest weather, and deposited with Mme. Gabrielle. "Madame," I said again as we brought the heaped armfuls in, "will you not make this distribution yourself?" "But it is very difficult," she remonstrated, "and all the world will say that I am partial." "I will tell all the world that the distribution is mine," I urged. "You can see yourself that we are very busy,—and you know the size for each child." Reluctant though she was, Mme. Gabrielle's kind heart could not refuse. On a Sunday not long after, a strange yet strangely familiar audience sat in the little church, the women in coats all of one pattern, but of different colours, the children in smart blue hooded capes. No one looked self-conscious, or thanked us. The distribution, like the snow, had fallen on the just and on the unjust; it was a providence for which one thanked God.

CHAPTER IX

EN PERMISSION

AT noon time, on dispensary days, I sometimes lunched with the doctors in Mme. Lefèvre's kitchen. It was a heterogeneous spot, with two beds (one being stored for a niece), two cats, and a few neighbours always sitting near the fire. Usually the neighbours were waiting for *la factrice*. A tap at the window, and Madame ran to open it, and received a handful of letters which the postmistress brought each day by bicycle from Nesle. Were it cold, she herself, a capable, pleasant-faced woman, came in to join the group for a moment, threw back her long cape, and warmed her numb hands. Meantime spectacles were brought out and the envelopes scanned. It was not alone of the return of the refugees that the village lived in hope. They



Muller
1915

- c'est un coup de fourreau de sabre.

[A cut of a sword-scabbard.]

might come unannounced, but the soldiers, *en permission*,—that was different. Any day Albert or Henri might write that he was coming home!

And when they came! It was in Mme. Lefèvre's kitchen again that I had the pleasure of seeing the greeting given to a soldier in faded blue. A bronzed and bearded man he was, the father of a family. But the family alas! the wife and the children, were *avec les Boches*. M. Huillard seemed to have returned therefore, unheralded. As he opened the door, the neighbours rose with exclamations; the men grasping his hands, the women presenting one cheek and then the other for a kiss. Questions followed: Where had he been stationed? At Verdun, and, more lately, at St. Quentin. "At St. Quentin? Have you seen Narcisse, then?" Mme. Carpentier inquired eagerly. "Yes, your husband was well. I have a letter." And M. Huillard fumbled in his pockets and brought out a thumbled envelope with the

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cramped address: Mme. Regina Carpentier, Canizy, Somme.

An account of the recent bombardment is curtailed by M. Huillard's own desire for information. This is his first visit to the village since his leave-taking during the tragic mobilisation of 1914. He has known, of course, of the German occupation; he has heard the terrible news of the deportation of wife and children. He has seen other devastated villages. But to-day, for the first time, he looks upon the ruins of his own home. I saw him standing alone that afternoon before the sagging door, which bore the staring military number 25, and beside it, chalked inscriptions in German and in English jostling each other: *Gott mit uns. Hot + buns*. Within, thistles grew about the hearth. M. Huillard uttered no sound, and shed no tears, but his face, as he turned away, was set in a white hatred, and his right hand rose to heaven in an unspoken vow.

No soldier on his ten days' leave remained

idle. Mme. Cordier's handsome son, looking even more handsome in the uniform of an Alpine *chasseur*, was no exception. In fact, when I first saw him, the uniform, including his decoration, was covered by a mason's white blouse. Up on a ladder, he was white-washing the walls of the stable in which his family then lived. A huge brick manger in a dark corner was startingly brought out by his brush. It served as a kitchen table, and was laughingly referred to as one of the conveniences of the *ménage*. In another home, I found one day a soldier-brother knocking up a cupboard out of rough planks. Cheerful was the sound of his vigorous hammer strokes, and cheerful the sight of a young and merry face among the ruins. It mattered not whether he had a bed to sleep in—one of the most difficult requests we had to refuse was that of a bed to a soldier—the younger *poilu en permission* was always gay. If his mother worked, he helped her; and day after day through the Christmas holidays one of these boys walked to the Château each

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morning to help Mme. Topin chop our wood. I happened in upon her on the eve of his departure. Her tiny cabin was full of an odour most appetising after my long day's walk. Over a glowing fire, she was turning waffles, "to put in his knapsack," she explained. But he had one the less for my having called; and over it his mother sprinkled half of the last teacupful of sugar she possessed.

Mme. Topin had another son also serving with the colours, who came home quite often to see his wife, because he was making a slow recovery from gas-injured lungs. She, during his absence, taught in the village school, while her old mother kept house and took care of three-year-old Guy. M. Topin it was who showed me around his ruined yard one day, pointing out the place of the five-room cottage, and telling me the colours of the roses whose blackened stalks still remained against the walls. "This was white and very fragrant; that yellow. I planted it on Guy's birthday. Here we had a bed of mignonette. Take care,

Guy—pardon, Mademoiselle.” And he stooped to wrench away from the child’s fingers a long cartridge picked up in the débris. “A German bullet,” he explained, handing it to me. “There are hundreds of them about.”

As I have said, the soldier *en permission* expected to work. Yet I know of one who was assigned to more of a task than he relished. Him, hapless being, I first encountered down by the old Château at Canizy, hunting rabbits for a stew. But as I remembered the dimensions of his mother’s *baraque*, it seemed to me that self-interest might prompt him to leave his hunting to assist me for a time. Besides his grandmother, his mother, a brother and a sister, there was an aunt who had arrived too lodge with the family,—a *réfugiée* from near Péronne. Utterly destitute and unhappy was the aunt. The fact that her husband and her daughter were still in the slavery from which she had escaped, would be enough to sadden any one, but she whispered to me that her sister

did not make her welcome. At the time, we were much in need of a domestic at our camp. "Would you like to come and work for us, perhaps," I suggested. "We have no lodging, but I will find you a shelter in Hombleux from which you can walk over with Madame our cook." Rash promise, to which I added a complete outfit of furniture and two francs a day. The offer was accepted.

From pillar to post, I then went to Hombleux. A regiment *en repos* had been quartered there since I had made arrangements with the baker's wife for a room in her tidy loft. Regiments succeeded one another rapidly, and during their sojourns there was literally no lodging to be had. I was finally directed to a corner in the outbuilding of a former convent school which was considered habitable. My soldier I pressed into service to assist its quondam tenant, who had moved out because it was so cold, in removing the vegetables, wood and furniture she still had stored there. He looked on while a resourceful young

girl pasted oiled paper on the iron window frame; he went to the woods and chopped and hauled a tree for fuel; he brought over at the same time a plank with which to mend the door. This took a day, which I, meantime, spent in Ham. There I bought a bed, mattress and bedding, a stove, a pipe, an elbow for the same, a chair, a table, a metal wash basin and a pitcher, a saucepan, a little set of dishes, a lamp, a brush and a broom. It is surprising how many things are necessary for even a primitive existence. Two days more were consumed in setting these few articles in place, and all the neighbours helped.

The snow had come, meantime, and the soldier returned to rabbit hunting. As he remarked on pointing out the little roads beaten by them through the weeds, "They look much better *en casserole*." It remained for our own soldier at the château to bring our domestic to her new home. One frosty morning, Tambour and the cart awaited me after breakfast, and I set forth. Old Tambour appeared none too

steady on the trot to which I urged him. "*Ça glisse*," explained Carlos, and we relapsed into a walk. In fact, all the way to Canizy we walked, the shrewd wind biting nose and ears and coursing under the blankets on the high seat. Carlos got out, winding the lines about the whipstock. The horse floundered through drifts, and he, adjusting his cap to the veering gusts, trudged at his head. At length, we debouched upon the direct road to the village. But, barring our way was a machine-gun squad. Already the red signals had been posted and the route was *défendu*. Even as we halted, came volleys like staccato hail. On other occasions, with honking horn, we have run this gauntlet, the sentries halting the fire for us to pass. But to-day, I judged it safer to turn down into a hollow, and skirt the action. Thus delayed, it was near noon when we turned into the gate of the Château at Canizy.

We were expected, however; coffee was hot upon the stove, and the soldier *en permission*

served it, stirring the cups in rotation with the one family spoon. Madame, our new domestic, was ready also, with quite a store of bedding and clothing done up in a sack. Two kisses apiece, a last admonition, a promise to come to see her on Sunday, and she climbed up over the wheel. To her, I imagine, the journey to Hombleux seemed like a voyage to a foreign country. Nor was she welcomed, as I afterwards learned, by her new neighbours in the commune. It seems, one should have gone to the mayor first for permission to instal her; and certainly one should have paid more money to that inconvenienced lady, the former tenant. As Madame said, "She talks most unkindly." To add to the newcomer's hardships, the winter wind ripped the oiled linen from the window, and her nephew, the soldier, never returned to mend the door. "*Bien mal logée*," having to walk a mile and a half through the snow at dawn and after dark, it is not to be wondered at that she made a final choice of her sister's



- Si j'étais grand

[If I were grown up!]

sharp tongue and warm fire, and left our employ.

Akin to the soldier *en permission* is the soldier *en repos*. Of the latter class was our Carlos, who was given us by M. le Sous-Préfet, together with a horse and two carts. He was to report during his stay to no one but Mlle. la Directrice, nor would the authorities take any direct cognisance of him save in case of her complaint. A southerner was Carlos, a dapper man from the Basque provinces. There he had a wife and two children whom he had not seen for three years. But he expected a *permission* shortly, he said; and that may have reconciled him to the uncongenial hewing of wood and drawing of water to which he was detailed. Day long he drove, or chopped trees, or cleaned the stable, as advised. His only diversion appeared to be our milk maid,—a harmless enough one, I presume; for she told us proudly and often how she received a letter from her soldier-husband every day. Nevertheless, there was visible sadness when one

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morning Carlos announced that he had been transferred. And was he then going home? No, his *permission* had been taken away; he was returning to the front. He and Tambour were to join the artillery. Poor old Tambour, faithful, plodding; one knew not for which to feel more compassion, the horse or the master, as one pictured them dragging into position the grey seventy-fives! "Good-bye, then," I said, "I am sorry." "O, what would you," he replied. "So it goes. But you, you are leaving also. Some one has told me, for America—*La bonne chance, Mademoiselle.*"

Unlike Carlos only in that they came by regiments, were the shifting troops taken at intervals from the trenches for a brief rest in our more habitable villages. One saw them, a weary line of blue, marching down the roads, flanked by stretcher bearers, and followed by a provision train. Once settled, they stood about the corners of the streets or in the gaping doorways; a disconsolate enough addition to the

ruins. Or at the camp kitchens, drawn up to one side, they grouped themselves around huge cauldrons of soup. Sometimes a more ambitious company set to work to clean up the village and built an outdoor bathing tank which was much in use. On one occasion, a dashing troop of blue devils gave military concerts each evening. An incongruous sight was the band, drawn sprucely up in a desolate courtyard, and a strangely stirring sound, the music floating through the empty streets, of *Ce que c'est qu' un drapeau*. Often soldiers and even officers came over to see us at the Château and to ask for cigarettes or shoes. If one had time to listen, they talked for hours on the war. They were never boastful, these soldiers; they had a just estimate of the German strength of organisation; they had no illusions as to their own personal fate. Each one expected to die at his post. Patient, sturdy, intelligent, they gave one confidence that, however heavy the dawn bombardments,

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our lines would hold. And if our lines, then all the lines manned by them with such spiritual as well as physical courage. The morale of the *poilu*, unflinching, will yet win the war.

CHAPTER X

A LA FERME DU CALVAIRE

MIDWAY between Hombleux and Canizy, at the crossing of the highway, stood on one side a Calvary, and on the other a demolished farm house. The lane here emerged from a hollow, so that both objects rose distinctly against the sky. About the Calvary, the poplars were shattered by shell-fire; back of the farm sloped an orchard, whose every tree had been lopped. Across the road and into the fields ran a zigzag trench, where could be found even yet blue coats and rusted helmets; the line of defence evidently for the highway, against the German advance. A square declivity, formerly a clay pit, perhaps an hectare in area, bordered road and trench. Its banks were green with grass, and in the

bottom land was a little orchard. At one side, half-hidden, was a hut.

A solitary farm is rare in these rural communities, where the houses as a rule cluster in villages. I was undecided at first as to whether the Farm of the Calvary belonged to Hombleux or Canizy. But in the yard were two obvious reasons for calling and inquiring. Higher than the hut rose a heaped hay stack; at its base the apples from the orchard had been gathered in a mound of red and white. I ran down the path, too steep for walking, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a gaunt, dark man of perhaps forty-five. At a table sat his wife paring apples; and in a corner, quite unabashed, his daughter, pretty Colombe, finished lacing her bodice before she stepped forward to greet me. So small a room, in any of our villages, I had never been in. A double bed took up all the space except for a border of about two feet. The roof was so low that the man seemed to have acquired a perpetual stoop.

"*Entrez! entrez!*" was the hospitable entreaty; but not seeing how this might be possible, I remained on the threshold.

"I come from the Château," I began.

"But yes, you are one of the *Dames Américaines*, eh! We have often seen you cross the fields. Colombe, here, goes to the sewing class with you." Colombe smiled a recognition.

"I should have called before, perhaps; but I was not aware that a family lived in so small a place, until I saw the smoke from the chimney to-day."

"Yes, it is small," admitted the wife.

"A Boche hut, eh!" agreed her husband. "Yonder, across the road is my farm. Not one stone left; all destroyed. I have asked for a *baraque*."

I measured the interior with my eyes. "You would not have room for another bed——"

"If it folded, yes, and we would thank you. Colombe, she sleeps now on the ground."

The bed being promised, I inquired as to fodder. Could I see if it were suitable to feed



-C'est là, notre maison

[Our house used to be there!]

our cows? Assuredly; and the brown sides of the stack were rudely pulled apart that I might see and smell the sweet hay within. How much would it weigh and how much would it cost? A bargain was finally concluded for eight hundred francs.

This was the first of many visits to the hut beside the road. Going or coming, sharp eyes spied me, and friendly voices called me in. Once it was for a bumper of sparkling cider.

"I make it myself, from the apples. But I have to take them to Mme. Marié's in Hombleux because my press the Germans broke. Ah, the Germans!" he continued. "It is only a month and a half since I returned, eh!"

"Were you then taken to Germany?"

"To Belgium; and I worked, always. And hungry, always hungry; one has nothing, eh! to eat."

On another occasion I was offered apples; not the small, sour ones from which cider was made, but lucious golden globes that adorned the narrow beams of the hut like a frieze.

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"See," said Monsieur. "I will put them in this sack, so that you can carry them the more easily."

But I, thinking of the long miles yet ahead of me, ventured to suggest that I call on my return.

"Very well, only, look you, I shall not be here. But wait, I will hide them. Behold, in the *chaudière*," and suiting the action to the word he lifted the cover of the cauldron and placed them within. "No one will think to look for them there. Au revoir, until you return."

But a rain set in that afternoon; a slant mist which made Corot-like effects of brown autumn copses and shut one in from the sometimes too lonely sweep of the plain. At the same time, it beat persistently on my face, and made heavier at every step my woollen uniform. I did not stop therefore for my apples, and wondered for a few days what had been their fate. But not for long.

One morning at breakfast I was told that

I had a caller. Now callers about this time of a morning had become frequent, ever since Monsieur le Maire of the commune told his villagers that they must apply to us rather than to him for beds and stoves and cupboards. I visualised the waiting crones of Hombleux whom in America we should have thrust into an Old Ladies' Home. Not so the French Government, which respected their sentiment and built for each on her own plot her own *baraque*. Knowing well that we had no cupboards, and no prospect of getting any, I rose with a sigh. But my face brightened at the sight of M. Guilleux.

Over his back hung a sack, nor was it empty.

"You did not come for your apples," he began. "I hope that you wish them, however." He unslung the sack, opened it, and disclosed the golden fruit.

I thanked him. "But the sack, you wish it back?"

"Yes, for look you; it is a little souvenir." And at that he showed me certain crosses and

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darts and letterings in German script which indicated by number and description the prisoner, Guillaume Guilleux of the commune of Hombleux and the farm *du Calvaire*. "I took this with me, eh! I would not part with it."

"Not to me, Monsieur? To me also it would be a souvenir, to take to America."

"O no, Mademoiselle, never," and his hands clutched it involuntarily. "The souvenir and the memory, they are mine. Both my grandchildren shall remember also in the years to come."

But the sack was not the only souvenir contained in the little hut. I spied one day three tiny teacups depending from nails upon the wall. They were even smaller than coffee cups, and delicately flowered.

"Oh, how pretty," I exclaimed. "May I look?"

Mme. Guilleux took them down with fumbling fingers and a suddenly altered face. For the first time, I noticed the sharp indrawn

wrinkles about mouth and eyes which tell of suffering.

"They belonged to Solange, Colombe's sister," and not able to continue, she hid her face in her apron. "They were her tea-set," she went on in broken sentences. "Her father and I bought them for her on her thirteenth birthday, and she always kept them. *Mon Dieu*, how lovely she was! Curls, and long lashes, and skin like apple blossoms, and eyes blue like those flowers! She was my oldest, and good as she was pretty. But on the night when the Germans came, they tore her from my arms. Why do I live?" she broke into sobs. "Solange, Solange!"

She wiped her eyes at length, and regarded the little cups. "When we returned, I searched the ruins. I was fortunate, for I found these. They were all that I did find. Everything else had been destroyed. Nor did I save anything, for look you, after the soldiers seized Solange, I ran hither and thither distracted, and knew not what to save."

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She rose, took the cups from my hands, and rehung them on the wall.

How do they live, I wondered, as I passed out and over the fields? How do these mothers keep their reason, who have seen their daughters taken into a captivity upon which shuts down a silence deep as death? One understands the comment of Mme. Charles Thuillard, who in spite of her sharp tongue has a most human heart. She was showing me the picture of her daughter one day; an enlargement such as all the world makes of its dead. "Thank God," she said, "she was happy; she died before the war."

CHAPTER XI

LES PETITS SOLDATS

Ou t'en vas-tu, soldat de France,
Tout équipé, prêt au combat,
Ou t'en vas-tu, petit soldat?
C'est comme il plaît à la Patrie,
Je n'ai qu' à suivre les tambours.
Gloire au drapeau,
Gloire au drapeau.
J'aimerais bien revoir la France,
Mais bravement mourir est beau.

SO, in chorus, sang the children of my village, day after day, as they marched and circled about us up and down the streets. A catching tune; a laughing eye; did they realise that only twelve miles away on the firing line their soldiers were dying for the glory of the flag? No, it was not possible for them, fugitives though they themselves had been, to live the horrors of war. As Mme. Gabrielle said:

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"The children laugh; they do not know that our world is destroyed, and it is well."

Yet it would be hard to find a more manly group of boys in any land than those of Canizy. They were soldiers, even in their dress; blue caps, and blue or khaki blouses and trousers which their mothers had cut and made from the cast-off coats of passing troops, English or French as the case might be. Stockings also were of a military colour; for as Mme. Marie Gense explained: "One can find stockings in the trenches sometimes,—dirty, of course, and ragged; but they can be washed and raveled, and the yarn is excellent." So it came about that little Robert had one pair of stockings with blue tops and khaki feet, because, you understand, there was not enough wool of one colour to complete them. Above his wooden sabots, the straight splicing was plainly visible, if he were ever *en repos*. But my memory of Robert is of tireless feet that twinkled almost as merrily as his eyes. It was no hardship for him to walk the eight miles back and forth to

the Château of a morning for his quart can of milk. Mud, rain, snow, it was all one to him. By the hand, he often brought a younger cousin, Albert, aged six. Chubby-faced and sturdy of leg was Albert, clad in a diminutive khaki suit, and a brown visored cap which failed to blight his red cheeks. Robert, being brave and unconscious, whistled the merry call he had been taught, "Bob White, Bob White!" and smiled at all the world. But Albert, being shy, buried his small nose between cap and muffler, hung his head, and if pressed too far by unsought civilities, presented his back.

It would be small wonder if all the children of Canizy had been shy. With their elders they were virtual prisoners during the German occupation. They had no incentive to gather in groups, no church and no school. Rather, they were taught to slip in and out in silence lest they attract sinister attention. One of our little soldiers to the end of his life will carry a mark of German brutality in a hand maimed by a too well aimed grenade.

Even since the Retreat, their life has consisted of skulking more or less among the ruins. Raiding aeroplanes, by night or day, drop bombs in their vicinity; for Canizy lies near to Ham, the munition centre of the St. Quentin front. They hear the bombardments; and the rumours fly that the Boches are advancing. Will the lines hold? Their mothers keep eyes and ears open to the eastward. One refuses to buy a stove, because she thinks it is too risky an investment; her husband is sure the Germans will return, and a stove, it cannot be carried away. "What will you do then, if the Germans come?" I ask. "*Fly,*" is the universal reply. "*We know the Boches; better to die than remain.*"

Even in the fields, a child cannot play. One day I was taken by a bevy of laughing little girls to see an *obus* which had fallen in the graveyard near the entrance to the church. It had lain there some months unexploded, hidden by grass and weeds. But the preparations for All Saints' Day, as punctiliously



** Et les momes boches, ils
embrassent leur père ?...*
[And do the little Boche children hug their father?]

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made last autumn as in times of peace, revealed it. The girls danced about it like sprites, touching it spitefully with their toes. "Take care," I cried. "Come away." Merry laughter greeted my alarm. "There are many of them," said dare-devil Thérèse; "they do no harm." Nevertheless, knowing that a farmer had been killed while ploughing, not far away, by just such a shell, I sent word to the military authorities who removed this particular *obus*, before the next Sunday's mass. The Government recognises the danger, and prints large placards of warning, which are hung up in the schoolrooms.

The schools themselves are depressing enough, for against no class of buildings did the Germans vent more hatred. Throughout the devastated area, they were completely destroyed. *Ecole des Filles*, or *Ecole des Garçons* may still be seen in white capitals adorning a gaping arch or a jagged wall. But the schools, such as they are, are held in half-ruined dwellings, or in *barraques*. One

such dilapidated interior bore, beside the warning against spent shells, the following "Fable for the day," written in the teacher's slant hand upon the blackboard: "At our last breath, we shall have nothing. Since we have neither father nor mother, we are now orphans. Nevertheless, we must do right. We must do right because it is right."

In Canizy, as I have said, there was no school. The walls even of the former school building were razed to the ground. But the children were supposed to attend the school of another commune, that of Offoy, a mile and a half distant along the canal. This seemingly simple provision for education was made impossible by the fact that regiments continuously *en repos* at Offoy used the sandy buttes formed by the Somme at this point for *mitrailleuse* practice. One saw them every afternoon at half past two, bringing out their gruesome targets, in the shape of a human head and shoulders, and sentineling the crossroads with notices and red flags. Then woe to the urchin

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lingering perhaps in Offoy on some belated errand. Like the rabbits he must stay under cover until the fusillades should cease. Yet the children of the village were not wholly neglected. It was their former teacher, now resident in Hombleux, who taught them the stirring *Petit Soldat*. And from Offoy came M. l'Aumônier, of whom you shall hear later, to teach them the catechism and to receive them into the church. "They are very *gentils*, the children of Canizy," he assured me one day. "They are not like the children of the other villages. They have brave parents; they are well brought up."

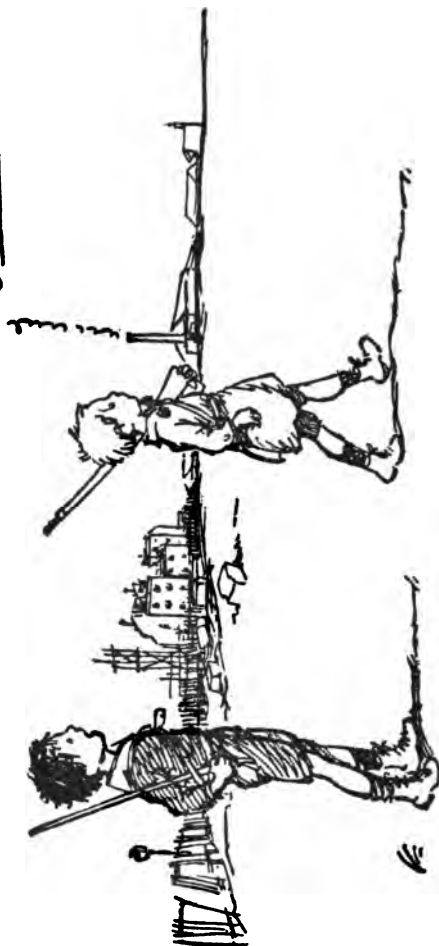
Well brought up, yes, in all the usages of docility and endurance. Shifting of troops, obedience to military masters, slavery and pillage, such are the facts which these children have learned for three years. But grafted as the lesson has been upon a spirit gentle by nature, the result is terrible in its sombreness. Robert Gense, uncannily helpful; Raymond Carpentier, threadbare and bowed at fourteen,

—a look like that of a faithful, whipped dog in his eyes,—Elmire Carlier, whose lovely mouth is carved in patience, the Tabarys, ragged and elfin—these are the children of Picardy. But where is the spontaneity of childhood? Where may one find it in the track of war?

On our own playground, perhaps, sometimes. Yet the children had to be encouraged to play. They might remember the words of the *rondes* which have lately become familiar to American children also through the illustrations of Boutet de Monville, but they no longer curtsied as the beautiful gentlemen and the beautiful ladies should *sur le pont d'Avignon*. They no longer had books to read. A prayer book, a hymnal, sometimes the family records; these were all the literature saved in their mothers' sacks of flight. But the play teacher draws our waifs of the war as if with a magic flute; even M. Lanne's cows come trooping with the children, because the boy who herds them cannot come without.

3

Garde à vous !



rouleau

fil...
- compagnie ! halt !
[Company . . . halt !]

The babies come, with older sister nurses; and on the outskirts may be seen bent grandfather or grandmother, forgetting sorrow for the moment, in watching the romping groups. And even after the store automobile, stripped of its merchandise, honks persistently its desire to be off, the joy of that brief hour is perpetuated in the books that the teacher leaves behind. Who so proud then as the boy or girl singled out to be the owner of a book for a whole week? *Contes des Fées*, *petites histoires*, the *rondes* themselves; they are treasures comparable to fairy gold. Yet reading never seems to interfere with duty; Raymond, or Désiré, or Adrien, you are likely to meet them as usual *en route* to Voyennes for apples, or returning from Ham with loaves of bread hanging, like life preservers, about their necks; they pasture the few cows; they feed the rabbits; they bring wood and dig coal,—they are the men of Canizy.

Such grow to be the soldiers of whom France is proud; those older children, the *poilus*, whom

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all the world has come to know. Long ago Julius Cæsar knew them also, and Hirtius Pansa wrote of them: "They make war with honour, without deceit and without artifice." Brought up to adore *la Patrie*, singing of death, as of glory, the little soldier of France marches to-day as did the child in the Children's Crusade. Across three thousand miles I hear his refrain:

*Point de chagrin,
Point de chagrin,
Il a sa gourde, il a sa pipe,
C'est un gaillard toujours en train.*

CHAPTER XII

M. L'AUMÔNIER

IN Canizy, one found always something new. It might be an *obus*, or a soldier *en permission*, or a family *réfugiée*, or a *baraque*. I learned to expect the unexpected. Having carefully negotiated with M. Lanne for certain timbers and chicken wiring which formed the basis for a roof of which I had need, I was prepared to see that they had vanished overnight, and to express neither surprise nor indignation when I was told that they were transformed into the foundation for Mme. Picard's *baragues*. Having left glass, diamond cutter, putty, brads, and a list of those who needed the panes, I was not discouraged when week after week went by without M. Augustin's cutting them. The fact that M. Noulin had brought the materials over in his

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cart, and held them on his premises, was doubtless reason enough why M. Augustin stayed his hand. At all events, it seemed wiser to leave the solution of this problem to the village; and the last I knew, it hinged on the return of a soldier *en permission*, a glazier by trade. He, all the world assured me, would actually cut the glass!

The Noulins themselves were among my earliest surprises. How they came I know not, but one day I found the trio, father, mother and daughter, tidying up the premises they had rented from M. Huillard. The outermost room, from the walls of which still depended half-charred pictures, gaped to the sky. But this was used as a store-room for neatly stacked wood and fodder; within, the main room served as both kitchen and *épicerie*; off it opened two bedrooms, and in the rear was a yard. The rooms were completely furnished and the yard stocked with hens and about thirty rabbits. In the stable stood a pony and a high-wheeled cart. All these

goods had M. Noulin bought and brought back from Compiègne, whither he had fled at the outbreak of the war.

It was in the *épicerie*, which we provisioned, that I came to look for most of the news of Canizy. Here, about the table, might sit drinking the Moroccans who were repairing the canal. Here Mme. Moulin thrust into my hand an account of our own Unit in her fashion journal of the month; an account glowing with undeserved praise of America and concluding with the words: "Heureux pays, où sur les mairies des villages on pourrait écrire: 'Aide-toi, l'Amérique t'aidera.' Plus heureuses Américaines, qui peuvent et qui savent donner!"

Here she showed me a postal marked *Deutschland*, and bearing on its back the picture of a jovial-looking man in civilian dress. "It is my son," explained Mme. Noulin. "He is a *prisonnier militaire*, and sends me this to show me how well he is. He writes, too, that he has plenty to eat, of sugar, of chocolate,

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and is always warm,—there is so much of coal! Think you it is true?”

On the table was lying a package, done up with many directions, all pointing to Germany. “What is this?” I asked. “That is for him; but the *factrice* could not take it to-day; such are her orders. No packages will be transported by Germany this week, or next, or who knows for how long? It is on account of a troop movement, she says.”

“But why then do you send, if he has no need?”

“There, what did I tell you?” broke in her husband. “Oh, these women; they have no minds! It is the enemy who sends the letters, that we may feel more bitterly the cold, the hunger, the misery, that we endure!”

It was at Mme. Noulin’s, in fine, that I first met M. l’Aumônier.

A snowy, windy morning it was, and the glare and the smart in my eyes blinded me so that I did not at first note anything unusual about the blue-clad soldier sitting by the fire.

Declining Madame's invitation to share the open bottle of wine on the table, I was proceeding with my errand when she interrupted, "Mademoiselle, I want you to know that this is M. l'Aumônier from Offoy, who takes an interest, like you, in Canizy."

The chaplain arose at the informal introduction. A deprecatory smile became well his sensitive yet Roman features, and a quick flush heightened his colour. "But no," he said, his enunciation betraying him a gentleman in spite of the plain uniform, "it is I who have been hearing of your goodness and that of your co-benefactresses, Mademoiselle."

"Mademoiselle," protested Mme. Noulin, "you should know that Monsieur walks from Offoy every morning before eight o'clock to conduct a class in the catechism in the church."

"That matters nothing; it is my pleasure, I would say, duty. But you—you who have come from America to help my poor France, you who walk so much farther. I, I have legs

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trained for walking by long marches, by a soldier's life——”

But I knew something of the duties of a military chaplain. Had I not seen the bare, dark infirmary where he comforted his invalided companions? Had I not visited the *baraque* called the Soldiers' Library which was more or less in his charge; that cheerless hut with the books locked out of sight in one corner, and the directions for rifle practice confronting one on the wall? Could not one divine the battle charges when M. l'Aumônier went forward in the ranks with his comrades, or stopped only to give them the sacrament as they fell? Did I not know the calls made upon him by the civilians also, now that he was *en repos*? A soldier's life, indeed, has inured the military chaplains of the French army to hardships by contrast greater perhaps than any endured by the other soldiers of France.

I strove to stop him, to express to him something of my deep appreciation of this added



*Sans l'officier, les soldats nous
auraient peut-être rien fait ?*

[If it hadn't been for the officer, I don't think the
soldiers would have done anything to us.]

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burden he had taken on his shoulders in the spiritual care of the children of Canizy.

But he waved away all implied sacrifice. "It is a pleasure," he repeated, "and the children are so good."

Thereafter, M. l'Aumônier became my most disinterested ally in our village. Did a mass seem desirable, the time was set late enough for me to reach it from the Château. What mattered it that thereby Monsieur did not breakfast till noon? When Mme. Gabrielle was still undecided over her distribution, he consented to lend his presence to the function, and thereby insured its success. He even undertook the responsibility of such a mundane matter as the cutting of the glass. Day after day, I met him in one family circle or another, making pastoral calls. Very different were those happy weeks to the villagers from the months preceding, when spiritual consolation came only with death. He seemed to find entrance into the hearts of the people,

and they responded to his care as flowers to the sun.

Wherever M. l'Aumônier went, went also a clean, blond soldier boy of twenty, who was studying to be a priest like his friend. He spoke English, which he had learned as a shipping clerk in an exporting house at Havre. "Our Colonel," he explained, "is very much interested in the civilians, particularly in the children. He even sent one of his captains to Paris to buy warm clothing for every one of them in Offoy. He is a very rich man and very kind. He has detailed me to help M. l'Aumônier all that I can."

We were walking along the canal as we spoke, and the wind blew straight from the north. M. l'Aumônier said something in a low voice, and the boy whipped off his scarf. "Yes, *please*, you are cold; you must take it," and perforce the scarf was wound about my neck.

"How long are you to be here?" I asked,

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dreading to see this regiment pass back to the front.

"Me, I do not know. I have been wounded, you know; twice with the bayonet, and ten days ago I was gassed. The lungs pain me yet,—I cannot do much work."

"You," broke in his superior, "you, Mademoiselle, will go before we do—for you have told me that you leave soon for America. At least, you will have seen something, and can tell them there of the misery which France suffers."

"But one sees so little,—the trenches, the battles, the hardships of the soldiers, I know nothing of these."

"The trenches? There is little to see; is it not so, comrade? But this," he swept his arm to indicate the circle of destruction all about us, "this you know. Tell them of the agony and of the fortitude of Picardy."

We had come to the parting of our ways. Turning west, I was confronted by a winter sunset; bare branches, crimson streamers, cold

lakes of turquoise; and bleak against this background, the ruins of Canizy. M. l'Aumônier was right; of this one who has seen it cannot help to speak; of the terrible devastation, of the silent courage of those who live in it and fight, unheralded, their fight for France.

CHAPTER XIII

HEUREUX NOËL

CHRISTMAS weather, sunlight, moonlight and snow; our grove a white stencil; our *baragues* with their red shutters by day and their lighted windows by night, like painted Christmas cards; our defaced and ruined villages new-clothed with beauty,—such was our Christmas week. But the snow, so beautiful to the eye, accentuated the bitter cold of our ill-lodged and under-nourished neighbours, and the moon pointed out to hostile aeroplanes desired points of attack. It was on account of the dangerous moonlight that the Bishop of Amiens forbade midnight masses in the churches. We, and our villagers, were the more disappointed because even during the German occupation these masses had been sung. We heard of loaded

Christmas trees, and of parties where cakes and chocolate were served by German officers. "Not for all the world, you understand," Colombe, our informant, explained, "just for themselves." Yet all the world had had some share in the German Christmas, and we felt eager to make up a little for the added hardships caused since that time by German cruelty, for all the ruined homesteads which are but the outward sign of families scattered, missing and dead.

Yet at first, so prevalent was the feeling of sadness, we thought it might not be desirable to have a fête. Did the villagers want one? Had the Christmas tree too many German associations? We made inquiry of M. le Sous-Préfet, and of the Commandant of the Third Army. From the latter came the following reply:

27.11.17. Guiscard

Dear Miss —,

I am glad to tell you that you got a stupid gossiping about the Christmas tree.

There is nothing at all in this country against the charming practice to delight the children with a spruce of which some toys are hanging all round among as many candels as possible.

Therefore you are free to be nice for the poor people once more and God bless you for your splendid charity.

With my kindest regards for you, for your chief, and your sisters,

Yours respectfully,

So it came about that in each of the villages there was a spruce, with toys and candles and goodies, and carols and Christmas cheer. In Canizy, thanks to good fortune and to M. l'Aumônier, the fête was especially pretty. I had not yet met the chaplain or planned my Christmas, when, on a late December afternoon, I happened to pass the little chapel, on my way to visit a group of families lodged within the grounds of the old Château. Several times before I had been inside, once for a mass on All Saints' Day, and more than once to look at the faded painting behind the altar, and at the quaintly quilted banners of the



- Il n'est pas venu ?... Il est mobilisé !
... .. Et il a pas eu de permission .

[He has not come? He has been mobilised. . . .
'And he has not had any leave.]

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saints along the wall. These, strange to say, had been left in place by the German invaders; save for a soiled altar cloth and two or three broken windows, the church, indeed, appeared as if it might still be in constant use.

To-day, in spite of the early gathering dusk, and the long walk home, an impulse beckoned me in,—a very definite impulse, however, for I had in mind to decipher a moulded coat of arms upon the walls, and to search the sacristy. In other village churches, alas! dismantled, were to be found carved chests of drawers, black letter Bibles, brasses, and glorious books of chants. Perhaps my little chapel might contain treasures also. Past Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Anthony of Padua, past the Sacred Heart, and that humble saint of gardens, St. Fiacre, to whom had nevertheless been given the place of honour on the Virgin's right, and up through the chancel I went. The door of the sacristy creaked at my sacrilege.

The alcove on which it opened was hung

with cobwebs. The floor was littered; drawers gaping awry disclosed a medley of candle ends, tinsel flowers, vases and books. But on shelves across the end, my eye caught glowing colours of vestments, green and gold and purple, lying in the same folds, apparently, in which M. le Curé had left them when he went forth into captivity three years ago. In a corner cabinet were sundry images, broken for the most part, and among them that of a wax doll, broken-armed and blackened with age, but encased in a bell of glass. In an opposite corner, behind a scaffolding, I found another treasure; a tiny thatched hut upon a standard, evidently designed to be borne in processions. Ivy, turned crisp and brown, entwined its four pillars, and chestnut leaves, silvered with dust, made an appliqué upon the thatch. The God of Gardens, the Festival of the First Fruits, perhaps,—had I not come here upon a Roman survival in old Picardy? But, suddenly, I saw with other eyes; here

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were the cross and the Christ-child; I had stumbled on the Christmas *crèche*.

Time pressed; I noted again the faded blazons which flanked the saints on either wall—a closed crown, a shield embossed with seven *fleurs-de-lis*, and upheld by two leopards—shut the outer door, and took my way to the Château. One can see that the Château of Canizy is ancient, by its two stone turrets and its Gothic arch. At least, it is so ancient that no one in the village remembers the family whose royal escutcheon adorns its chapel walls. It is but lately a ruin, however, at the wanton hands of the Germans. In a stable in the farmyard, I found the family I had come to visit, formerly domestics of the estate.

The old, bent grandmother, vacant-eyed and silent, sat in a corner nearest the fire. The mother, whom I never saw without her black cap, shook hands and dusted off a chair. The daughter, lovely as a beam of sunshine in that dark interior, offered me wine.

“But no,” I protested, “it is late,” and hav-

ing paid for the knitting of a pair of stockings, which was my errand, I continued, "Tell me, please. I have just come from the sacristy. There is a little house there."

"The *crèche*!"

"There is also a doll."

"Yes, the little Jesus!"

"Have you then all you need for the *crèche*, and would you like a mass for Noël?"

At that even the grandmother's eyes lighted.

"A mass! We have not had one for three years!"

Who, then, would clean the church, who trim the *crèche*, who tell me what to get for it? The answers came as rapidly as the questions. Elmire had always had charge of the *crèche*; she would return with me at once to see what was lacking.

Together we made our way back and inventoried (1) the *crèche* itself; (2) a white lace-bordered square, (3) the little Jesus, and (4) some tinsel, or angel's hair.

"There is lacking," Elmire thought quickly,

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“a Saint Joseph, a Blessed Virgin, six tapers, cotton wool, and perhaps a star.”

Twice on my homeward journey I was stopped by Elmire’s younger brother, running after me with breathless messages: “Elmire says, would you please get a shepherd,” and, “Elmire asks for three little sheep.”

Where one was to get these was as much a mystery as the priest for the mass. But I promised that all should be done.

The figures for the *crèche* were actually found in Amiens. To them was added a new little Jesus in a cradle; and the whole was brought by hand to Elmire. The delight of the entire family in unwrapping the various bundles was equalled only by my own in watching them. Afterwards, in the stable, the *crèche* was trimmed. Artificial flowers, blue and pink and tinsel, bloomed under Elmire’s deft fingers; the pillars were fluted with coloured paper, the roof plaited with holly leaves. A lamp was necessary in the dark place, and its light fell on the eager faces of



- Si on voit pas St Noël, on verra
peut-être un Zeppelin .

[Well, if we don't see Santa Claus, we may see a Zep-
pelin, anyhow!]

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the family, grouped about that fairy hut. "In a stable," I thought as I looked at them, "in a stable, the Christ is born again."

But it was M. l'Aumônier who voiced my thought at mass on Christmas Day. He had made a children's service of this, centred about the *crèche*. After the *cantiques*, led by the soldier-boy, after the triumphal *Adeste, Fideles*, the children knelt in a circle about the cradle of the Christ.

"My children," began the chaplain, "this year, you yourselves live in huts, in barns, and in stables; so in a stable lives the little Jesus, as you see. You know what it is to be cold, beneath the snow upon the roof; so does the little Jesus. You have been hungry; so is he.

"My children, it behooves you, therefore, to make for the little Jesus a cradle in your hearts; cleanse them, each of you, and ask the little Jesus in.

"What next should you do, my children? Should you not pray first of all for yourselves, that you may be kept from sin? Next, forget

not to pray for the soldiers of *la Patrie*, who only a few miles away, guard you from your enemies. Next, think on your fathers, your older brothers and sisters, who are with the Germans in captivity. Beseech mercy for them, my children, that the good God may return them to your homes. Next, be especially thoughtful of your mothers and obedient to them, who stand to you in the place of both your parents. And last, but also of importance, my children, remember in your prayers your benefactresses, these ladies who have given you this year the Christmas *crèche*."

M. l'Aumônier said more, but I could not hear it. I was aware that he himself set the children an example by praying for us, heretics though we were. It was only when we came out into the open sunlight, and walked up the street to Mme. Lefèvre's to strip the tree, that laughter became possible, and that one could see the accustomed smile in his eyes. Yet even at the fête, we could not escape from thanks. The presents, selected to be sure with



- Et si i gèle cette nuit ?...
- Ben mon vieux on pourra s'asseoir..

[And if it freezes to-night?
Why, old chap, we can sit down.]

care, but so inadequate compared with the needs, were hardly distributed when a hush fell on the packed room. A boy stepped forward, and began to read from a piece of paper in his hand. A girl followed. Their elders listened with the greatest satisfaction, nodding their heads and smiling at our amazement. And this is what they said,—a measure not of what we did, but of the spirit of stricken Canizy:

Le cœur des dames Américaines s'est emu, à la pensée des misères qu'avait entraînées derrière soi, la terrible guerre, et vous êtes venues parmi nous les mains pleines de bienfaits et vos cœurs débordant de dévouement.

Il nous est bien doux de vous dire merci, en cette circonstance créée encore par votre charité. Notre merci passera, permettez nous Mesdames et chères Bienfaitrices, par la crèche du petit enfant Jésus!

Puisse-t'il vous rendre en consolation, ce que vous lui donnez en bienfaits! Au début de l'année nouvelle, nos vœux sont pour vous et pour ceux qui vous sont chers! Que Dieu comble de gloire, et de prospérité votre noble Amérique! Qu'il féconde sa générosité inlassable, que Dieu vous accorde une bonne santé, nos chères Bienfaitrices, et qu'il vous dise toute l'affection de cette commune, profondément reconnaissante.

CHAPTER XIV

FIDELISSIMA, PICARDIE

SINCE the commencement of this short volume, the German flood has rolled again across the Somme. Péronne, Nesle, Ham, Noyon, those towns mentioned so often and so gloriously in the annals of France, have fallen once more into the hands of the enemy. With them go the villages where my Unit laboured. Canizy, it is no more. The green-bladed wheatfields have become fields of unspeakable carnage; the poor ruins again smoke to heaven, and down the shattered highways course endlessly the grey columns of that Emperor whose empire is pillage and death.

What, then, remains to us of our labours? At least a memory in the lives of the peasants, and a present help in this their time of stress. Our villagers were rescued, and taken by spe-

cial trains to safety. The Unit accomplished this work of succour. Their trucks were driven under shell fire through the villages to collect the inhabitants; sometimes they were the last over the bridges; they left our headquarters only when the Uhlans were within charging distance; they have fed and clothed thousands of refugees and soldiers. Mentioned with them in the newspaper accounts of their service is our Red Cross truck driver, Dave. The fate that has overtaken our peasants, what is it but a repetition of the immemorial blows that have welded and tempered their ancestral spirit? As one of their historians has limned them: "Les Picards sont francs et unis. . . . Ils vivent de peu. . . . Il arrive rarement que l'activité et le désir de s'avancer les déterminent à sortir de leur pays. . . . Ils sont sincères, fidèles, libres, braves, attaches à leurs opinions, fermes dans leurs résolutions." * It was to this spirit that

*Introduction à la histoire générale de la Province de Picardie. Dom Grenier.

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an ancient king of France paid honour, when he granted his kinsman, who held this province, a coat of arms bearing the royal lilies, and the motto: *Fidelissima, Picardie*.

A thousand such Picards we have known, women for the most part; enduring a bitter winter, a daily hazard, that they might live on their own land and till their own fields once more. There was Mme. Pottier, sitting in her wrecked bakery, where the empty bread baskets were arranged like plaques against the walls. Her husband and her three daughters were prisoners. Her youngest son had died a soldier. She showed me with trembling hands the letter she had received from his Colonel, commending his clean life and his brave death. Her only remaining child was a *religieuse*,—a Red Cross nurse. I found Mme. Pottier one day reading the "Lives of the Saints." "I like to read," she said, "all books that are good. I love well the good God." But she worked also, and knitted many a pair of stockings for us. First, how-

ever, the wool must be weighed. "It is just," she reiterated after each protest on my part. "My conscience will be easy so." And up a ladder she mounted to the loft, where stood scales designed to weigh sacks of flour. No weights being small enough, she took a few coppers from her pocket. "Voilà!" she said, throwing them into the balance. "Remember, the skeins weigh six sous; when the stockings are done, you shall see, they will be the same."

There was Mme. Gouge, beautiful and tragic, who came and cooked for us, in order to send her son to school in Amiens; and even more pathetic, her brother-in-law, formerly the owner of the prettiest house in the village, who often accompanied her and served our meals. He was the village barber as well, and on a Saturday was busy all day in his shed, heating water, shaving M. le Maire and other of his neighbours, and presenting each, on the completion of the task, with a view of shaven cheeks, or clipped hair, in the broken bit of mirror which hung beside the door.

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Orderliness seemed to be M. Gouge's ruling passion; the arbours in the two corners of his garden, the round flower-bed in the centre, the grassy square, the gravel walks,—all were as well kept as if the shattered house were still tenanted, and Madame, his wife, were looking out as she used to do upon the garden she loved.

Among the Picard soldiers, there was Caporal Levet, the boy-friend of M. l'Aumônier, who made so light of his wounds. "It is nothing," he repeated again and again after sharp fits of coughing brought on by exposure to the biting wind as he accompanied us during our week of fêtes. "This is nothing; I am resting now. Soon I shall go back. My Colonel, he told me only to-day that I must go down to the Midi to train Moroccans. That is to the bayonet. Me, I do not like the bayonet,—the charges. One goes with the blacks, you know. I have been wounded twice. But," a shrug of the shoulders, "my Colonel says that I am the youngest,

—and I should go.” Some one asked at one of the parties that he lead the Marseillaise. He protested for the first time. “We French,” he said, “we are droll; we do not like to sing always of dying for the glory of *la Patrie*.” But they die, nevertheless; and one is left only to wonder when his time will come, on what dark night, in the lull of the bombardment, when the blacks leap out of the trenches and lead the desperate charge.

In Hombleux, in the church, beside the altar, hangs the village roll of honour, bearing the names of six sons of Picardy fallen in its defence.

Roullard Pottier	Pierre Commont
Albert Gourbière	August Deslatte
Robert Gautier	Amidé Bens

Unknown heroes these, peasant names, roughly printed. Yet Hombleux, in the midst of its desolation, of its sorrow for those other sons and daughters forced into ignoble slavery, re-



*Oui, mais, il est fort papa, plus
fort que dix boches.*

[O yes, papa is strong, stronger than ten Boches.]

members its soldier dead. It remembers in prayer that France for which all have suffered. Near the illuminated scroll, upon its black background, stands a statue of Joan of Arc, and beneath it is placed this prayer:

O bienheureuse Jeanne d'Arc! que notre France a besoin, à l'heure présente, d'âmes vaillantes, animées de cette espérance que rien ne déconcerte, ni les difficultés, ni les insuccès, ni les triomphes passagers et apparents de ses ennemis; des âmes qui, comme vous, mettent toute leur confiance en Dieu seul; des âmes enfin que les efforts généreux n'effraient pas, et qui, ainsi que vous soldats, se rallient à votre étendard portant ces mots gravés: "Jésus! Maria! Vive labeur!" O Jeanne! ranimez tous les courages, faites germer de nobles héroïsmes et sauvez encore une fois la France qui vous appelle à son secours!

Fidelissima, Picardie! It was in Amiens, in the Library there, that I first saw the emblazoned coat of arms of the province, and those of her famous cities, Péronne, Nesle, St. Quentin, Amiens, Noyon, Ham with its castle, and Corbie, with its crows. I had come by slow train from Paris, and waited perforce for

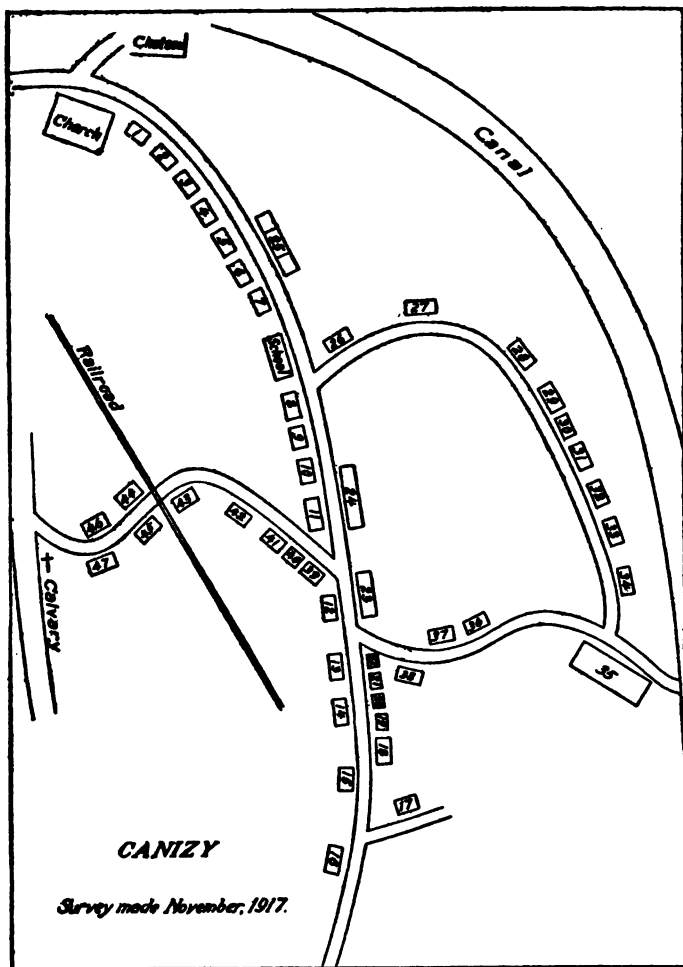
the still slower train which was to drop me that night at Hombleux, the nearest railroad station to our Château. Snow was upon the ground; the sunlight sharp and cold. It cleft the airy spire of the Cathedral out of the blue sky like a diamond-powdered sword. It frosted the delicate azure of the rose window, and high up among the clustered pillars, threw prismic whorls that floated like flowers upon a rippled stream of light. In the Library, it fell upon tooled leather bindings, upon the gorgeous blazons, upon pages illuminated, like the white walls of the Cathedral, with ethereal fruits and flowers. But the day was all too brief. As my train puffed and rumbled away from the city, dusk enveloped the plain till the evening star—or was it an *avion*?—burned forth. Passengers entered or descended, the last being a batch of Tommies bound for the Cambrai front. They were a noisy, good-natured lot, who slammed their rifles into the racks, trod upon one another's toes, and wished heartily that "this bloomin' war was done."

At Chaulnes they got out; an American engineer followed, and I was left alone. In total darkness the train proceeded, the engine as we swung around the curves looking like a dragon, belching fire. Presently, out of the vast level, rose the moon; and with it came those detonations which we, even in our sheltered camp, had learned to associate with its beauty. The Boches were bombing Ham.

Like my day in Amiens is my remembrance of Picardy; the dun plain, the windy sky, the play of light and shadow over both. The blazons given her by history glow anew in the heroisms of to-day. They form a glorious volume, illuminated with flowers as gorgeous as those traced by the monks of Corbie upon the pages of their Books of Chants, bound, as were they, with massive iron bands,—the iron bands of war.



APPENDIX



Plan of the Village.

APPENDIX

BEFORE THE WAR

1914

1. MME. MARIE GENSE—Had a few rabbits; good house.
2. M. NOULIN—Was a storekeeper; had rabbits and hens.
3. M. POITEAUX (soldat).*
4. M. LEON TABARY (living near Amiens).
5. M. HUILLARD (soldat).
6. M. COTTRET (prisonnier civil).
7. MME. AUGÉ—Had hens and rabbits; small garden.
8. M. HUILLARD (see 5.)
9. M. GAMBARD (at Compiègne).
10. M. THUILLARD, G. (at Bacquencourt).
11. MME. CORDIER—Had 10 cows, 2 bulls, 1 ox, 87 pigs, 8 horses, 150 chickens, 150 rabbits, market garden, orchard.
12. MME. CARPENTIER, J.—Had 8 cows, 2 horses, 80 hens, 50 rabbits, market garden.

* Where no information is given as to property, no member of the family remains in the village. It should be understood that every family had some member, or members, with the colours, or *avec les Boches*, or both.

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13. **MME. PICARD**—Had 2 cows, 1 horse, hens, rabbits, market garden.
14. **M. THUILLARD, O.**—Had 7 cows, 4 horses, 50 hens, 30 rabbits, 10 hectares of land for garden.
15. **MME. BROHON** (at Voyennes).
16. **MME. MOROY, R.** (at Esmery-Hallon).
17. **MME. CARPENTIER, R.**—Had 2 horses, 21 rabbits, 30 hens, garden.
18. **MME. LEFÈVRE**—Had 2 cows, 2 horses, 50 rabbits, 30 hens, market garden.
19. **M. MOROY**—Had 1 cow, 1 horse, 1 pig, 30 rabbits, 100 hens.
20. **M. CHARLET** (at Amiens).
21. **MME. MOROY** (dead).
22. **MME. TABARY, G.**—Had only a few rabbits; husband hostler at 23.
23. **MME. THUILLARD, G.**—Had 2 cows, 3 horses, hens, rabbits, market garden.
24. **M. TOURET** (prisonnier civil).
25. **M. LANNE** (at Ham).
26. **M. HENET** (prisonnier civil).
27. **MME. BUTIN**—Had a few hens and rabbits; small garden.
28. **M. TOURET** (prisonnier civil).
29. **MME. ROQUET** (dead).
30. **MME. CORREON**—Had rabbits and hens; small garden.
31. **MME. DESMARCHEZ** (at Esmery-Hallon).
32. **MME. DELORME** (at Amiens).
33. **M. HUYART** (at Voyennes).

34. M. REUET (in Paris).
35. M. REUET (in Paris).
36. MME. VILLETTE (at Voyennes).
37. MME. CERF (prisonnière civile).
38. MME. MOROY (dead).
39. M. THUILLARD, C.—Had 2 cows, 2 horses, 25 chickens, 200 rabbits, large market garden.
40. MME. MOROY (dead).
41. MME. MOROY (dead).
42. MME. MOROY (dead).
43. MME. CARPENTIER, R. (see 17).
44. MME. BUTIN (see 27).
45. M. THUILLIER, A.—Had 10 rabbits, 12 hens; was a cobbler.
46. MME. MOROY, CLAIRE—Had 1 horse, 1 cow, rabbits, hens.
47. MME. DELORME, O.—Had 100 rabbits, 40 hens, small garden.

In 1914 Canizy had 445 inhabitants.

November, 1917

1. Lives at 37 in a lean-to; small garden.
2. Lives at 5 in a partially ruined house; has an *épicerie*, in which we have stocked him, 1 pony, 80 young rabbits, 4 hens.
7. Lives at 7 in a barn; has 10 hens, small garden.
8. House occupied by Tabary, M.; has nothing.
10. Mme. Payelle lives here in a barn; does not belong in village; has nothing.

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11. Lives at 11 in a barn; has bought cow, horse, 24 rabbits, 9 hens.
12. Lives at 12 in a *baraque*; has a small garden.
13. Lives at 16 in a barn; has large market garden and employs one worker (Mme. Correon).
14. Lives at 18 in a shed; has 2 horses, 10 hens, 10 rabbits, large garden.
15. Mme. Musqua lives here; formerly factory worker, never owned land, has nothing.
17. Lives at 17 in a shed; has 3 hens, 2 rabbits, small garden.
18. Lives at 18 in a partially ruined house; has 3 hens, large garden. In her stable she houses Mme. Barbier, a worker in the fields.
19. Lives at 42 in one room; has a garden.
23. Lives at 44 in an ell; has a cow, 8 hens, large garden.
24. (Father of prisoner) lives here, with 46.
30. Lives at 34 in a cottage; works for 13, has nothing.
32. M. Lecart lives here in a cottage; formerly coachman at Château; has nothing.
39. Lives at 39 in a barn; has a large garden.
42. Mme. Tabary, L., lives here in partially ruined house, never owned land; has a goat.
43. Mme. Cerf, who used to rent 46, lives in a barn; has a few hens and a garden.
44. Lives at 44, with her daughter (see 23).
45. Lives at 16 in a shed; has a garden.
46. Lives at 24 in a barn; has a garden.

47. Lives at 47 in a chicken house; has 4 hens, 1 rabbit.

At the Château live three families, formerly employed on the estate. They have gardens.

In all, there are 100 persons in Canizy.

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